

REACTIVE NATIONALISM & ITS PROSPECTS FOR CONFLICT: THE TAIWAN ISSUE,
SINO-US RELATIONS, & THE 'ROLE' OF NATIONALISM IN CHINESE FOREIGN
POLICY

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ABSTRACT

Although nationalism is often posited as a cause of interstate conflict, few scholars have addressed why such a connection might exist. Using the constructivist approach in IR theory to rethink the usual perspectives on nationalism, the author argues that nationalism is as much a product of international politics as it is a product of domestic political forces. In essence, nationalism is constituted by the social structure of the international system. As such, the conflict propensity of nationalism is largely dependent on the nature of the social relationships that develop between states and the distribution of ideas that provide these relationships with meaning. Specifically, this dissertation argues that nationalism can be seen as both a macro- and micro-structural phenomenon, each having different implications for understanding nationalist conflict. At a macro-structural level, nationalism is an expression of a particular type of state (a nation-state) with explicitly 'national' interests which sets the parameters on behavior by informing the state what it wants, and what is worth fighting for. At a micro-structural level, nationalism is the result of a conflict between the role that the state seeks to enact and the counter-role that an Other seeks to impose on it, and thus is a reaction to perceived threats to its identity that can lead to a downward spiral in relations and (potentially) to interstate conflict.

This theoretical framework is then used to examine Chinese foreign policy, particularly the Taiwan issue and Sino-US relations, in order to address the common claim that the growth of

nationalism makes China more prone to interstate conflict. This analysis yields three conclusions. First, Chinese nationalism was a product of China's interaction with the West and represents a transformation in identity from cultural-state to a nation-state. Second, this transformation forced China to redefine its relationship to territory and to interpret its territorial losses as a legacy of national humiliation, setting parameters on its behavior. Third, China's 'new nationalism' is a reaction to a perceived identity threat from the United States that has led to a marked deterioration in Sino-US relations since Tiananmen Square.

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Chapter 1. INTRODUCTION: THE PROBLEM OF NATIONALIST CONFLICT

Nationalism, which has been called “the most powerful political force of the twentieth century,”¹ has long been a popular subject of scholarly inquiry. However, the end of the Cold War brought a renewed interest in the subject due to the breakup of multinational states like the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia, and the outbreak of ethnic conflicts in the Balkans, central Africa, Indonesia, and elsewhere.² While scholars have examined the potential for such conflicts to become internationalized,³ much of the new attention on nationalism has been focused on the problem of ethnic conflict within states.⁴ The question of how nationalism affects the foreign policy behavior of states, and particularly how this could produce *interstate* conflict, has received relatively little attention. This is despite the fact that nationalism has often been posited as a source of such conflict. The historian, Carlton Hayes, compiled a long list of wars that he asserted were rooted in nationalism.⁵ James Kellas has remarked that “the critical importance of nationalism in international relations is recognised in the received wisdom that

¹ William Pfaff, *The Wrath of Nations: Civilization and the Furies of Nationalism* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1993), 13.

² Jack Snyder, “Nationalism and the Crisis of the Post-Soviet State,” *Survival* 35, no. 1 (Spring 1993): 5; Barry R. Posen, “Nationalism, the Mass Army, and Military Power,” *International Security* 18, no. 2 (Fall 1993): 80; Donald L. Horowitz, “Ethnic and Nationalist Conflict,” in *World Security: Challenges for a New Century*, 2d ed., ed. Michael T. Klare and Daniel C. Thomas (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1994), 175; James Mayall, “Nationalism in the Study of International Relations,” in *Contemporary International Relations: A Guide to Theory*, ed. A. J. R. Groom and Margot Light (London: Pinter Publishers, 1994), 188-89; and Lui Hebron and John F. Stack, Jr., “The Internationalization of Ethnicity: The Crisis of Legitimacy and Authority in World Politics,” in *The Ethnic Entanglement: Conflict and Intervention in World Politics*, ed. John F. Stack, Jr. and Lui Hebron (Westport: Praeger Publishers, 1999).

³ For instance, see *The International Spread of Ethnic Conflict: Fear, Diffusion, and Escalation*, ed. David A. Lake and Donald Rothchild (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998).

⁴ For instance, see Ted Robert Gurr and Barbara Harff, *Ethnic Conflict in World Politics* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1994); *Nationalism and Ethnic Conflict*, ed. Michael E. Brown et al. (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1997); *Wars in the Midst of Peace: The International Politics of Ethnic Conflict*, ed. David Carment and Patrick James (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1997); Rajat Ganguly and Raymond C. Taras, *Understanding Ethnic Conflict: The International Dimension* (New York: Longman, 1998); and *Peace in the Midst of Wars: Preventing and Managing International Ethnic Conflicts*, ed. David Carment and Patrick James (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1998).

⁵ Carlton J. H. Hayes, *Essays on Nationalism* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1926), 135-37.

‘nationalism’ caused both World Wars in the twentieth century.”⁶ Similarly, John Mearsheimer has asserted that “hyper-nationalism helped cause the two world wars, and the decline of nationalism in Europe since 1945 has contributed to the peacefulness of the postwar world.”⁷

Unfortunately, such assertions about the relationship between nationalism and interstate conflict remain largely unexamined, as “few scholars have tried directly to connect the two phenomena.”⁸ As Stephen Van Evera points out, “most authors take the war-causing character of nationalism for granted, assuming it without proof or explanation,”⁹ leaving the presumed linkage between them woefully under-theorized. This is symptomatic of a broader problem in the study of international relations – namely, Ilya Prizel’s observation that the “literature on the role of national identity in the formation of foreign policy remains in an embryonic state.”¹⁰ According to James Mayall, “the virtual absence of an authoritative account of [nationalism’s] international impact”¹¹ results in two related problems:

On the one hand, without such an account, nationalism itself will continue to resist ultimate explanation, since it will not be clear how far it springs from, or is constrained by, a particular kind of international environment. On the other hand, in the analysis of international politics, nationalism is likely to be regarded as a convenient black box into which whatever cannot be explained in any other way...can be filed away without further consideration.¹²

This study will argue that these problems are not only related, but in fact represent two sides of the same coin. Nationalism is, in part, a product of the international system – namely, it is part of the social structure of shared knowledge that shapes the system and gives it meaning. This has important consequences for the way in which states define themselves and their interests, and thus for their behavior. In order to understand the relationship between nationalism and interstate conflict, it is therefore essential to develop a greater theoretical understanding of how nationalism is constituted by the

⁶ James G. Kellas, *The Politics of Nationalism and Ethnicity* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1991), 146.

⁷ John J. Mearsheimer, “Back to the Future: Instability in Europe After the Cold War,” *International Security* 15, no. 1 (Summer 1990): 7. It should be noted that despite this observation, Mearsheimer maintains that the distribution of military capabilities among actors was a more immediate cause (p. 12).

⁸ Posen, “Nationalism, the Mass Army, and Military Power,” 80.

⁹ Stephen Van Evera, “Hypotheses on Nationalism and War,” in *Nationalism and Ethnic Conflict*, ed. Michael E. Brown, et al. (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1997), 26.

¹⁰ Ilya Prizel, *National Identity and Foreign Policy: Nationalism and Leadership in Poland, Russia, and Ukraine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 7.

¹¹ James Mayall, *Nationalism and International Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 5.

¹² *Ibid.*, 5.

international system, the implications this has for the identities and interests of states, and how these identities and interests are translated into foreign policy behavior.

Defining the Problem: Nationalism & Its Impact on State Behavior

The idea that nationalism may be a factor in international conflict would seem to have at least some face validity. Nationalism is often equated with xenophobia and an almost irrational glorification of the nation-state. It would therefore not take a great leap of faith to presume that such conditions might lead to more aggressive foreign policy behavior on the part of a nationalistic state. The expansionist policies of Nazi Germany and imperialist Japan in the 1930s and 1940s are generally regarded as quintessential examples of the aggressive tendencies of highly nationalistic states. The enthusiastic public support expressed by European publics for the launching of WWI is another oft-cited, if less extreme, example of the presumed connection between nationalism and international conflict. However, as Stephen Reicher and Nick Hopkins point out, “there is a danger in reducing nationalism to its most intense manifestations.”¹³ Namely, it risks ignoring the fact that nationalism may often be expressed in rather mundane ways that never reach the level of violent conflict, and thus slip below the radar screen. As Ernest Gellner has suggested, “nationalism is like gravity, an important and pervasive force, but not, at *most* times, strong enough to be violently disruptive.”¹⁴ Similarly, Michael Billig has argued that the association of nationalism with extremism incorrectly leaves it on the periphery of political experience.¹⁵ Thus, two essential questions arise – how does nationalism affect the behavior of states? Does it really make states more prone to engage in conflict? It is important that we do not take the answer to such questions for granted, but instead develop a theoretically informed approach to addressing them.

Yet despite the importance of such questions to both scholars of nationalism and international politics, they have not been adequately addressed. The two relevant literatures – nationalism and

¹³ Stephen Reicher and Nick Hopkins, *Self and Nation: Categorization, Contestation and Mobilization* (London: SAGE Publications, 2001), 2.

¹⁴ Ernest Gellner, *Encounters With Nationalism* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1994), xi.

¹⁵ Michael Billig, *Banal Nationalism* (London: SAGE Publications, 1995), 5; see also Craig Calhoun, *Nationalism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), 2.

international politics – remain separated by a conceptual chasm that few have attempted (or desired) to bridge. On the one hand, “sociologists and political scientists who study nationalism rarely venture into foreign affairs as a major issue.”¹⁶ Instead, the literature on nationalism has tended to focus on seemingly endless debates over its nature and origins. The fact that these debates have largely failed to yield agreement or even establish widely accepted definitions for the central concepts of ‘nation’ and ‘nationalism’ has simply added to the problem by making the terms more difficult to operationalize.¹⁷ On the other hand, scholars of international politics have generally shown little interest in nationalism, a fact that some now see as both shocking and embarrassing.¹⁸ Instead, the field has been primarily concerned with rationalist and systemic explanations of state behavior, neither of which owes itself well to studying nationalism, a phenomenon that is difficult to understand in rationalist terms and rarely conceived of in systemic terms. With a few notable exceptions,¹⁹ realists in particular have largely avoided addressing issues of nationalism or ethnicity.²⁰ This “‘neglect-of-nationalism’ problem”²¹ is particularly serious if one accepts F. H. Hinsley’s contention that nationalism and international conflict should not be seen as separate fields, but as “inseparable, if different, facets of a single phenomenon – of the division of men into political groups.”²² The result has been that the question of nationalism’s impact on the foreign policy behavior of states has essentially fallen through the conceptual cracks.

Bridging the gap between nationalism and international relations (IR) requires addressing the tendency toward theoretical reductionism that exists in much of the literature on nationalism. This

¹⁶ Prizel, *National Identity and Foreign Policy*, 7.

¹⁷ Martha L. Cottam and Richard W. Cottam, *Nationalism and Politics: The Political Behavior of Nation States* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2001), 5.

¹⁸ Hebron & Stack, “The Internationalization of Ethnicity,” 3; Yosef Lapid and Friedrich Kratochwil, “Revisiting the ‘National’: Toward an Identity Agenda in Neorealism?,” in *The Return of Culture and Identity in IR Theory*, ed. Yosef Lapid and Friedrich Kratochwil (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1996), 105.

¹⁹ See Mearsheimer, “Back to the Future”; Posen, “Nationalism, the Mass Army, and Military Power”; and Barry R. Posen, “The Security Dilemma and Ethnic Conflict,” *Survival* 35, no. 1 (Spring 1993): 27-47.

²⁰ John F. Stack, Jr., “The Ethnic Challenge to International Relations Theory,” in *Wars in the Midst of Peace: The International Politics of Ethnic Conflict*, ed. David Carment and Patrick James (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1997), 19; Hebron & Stack, “The Internationalization of Ethnicity,” 4.

²¹ Yosef Lapid, “Theorizing the ‘National’ in International Relations Theory: Reflections on Nationalism and Neorealism,” in *International Organization: A Reader*, ed. Friedrich Kratochwil and Edward D. Mansfield (New York: HarperCollins College Publishers, 1994), 20.

²² F. H. Hinsley, *Nationalism and the International System* (Dobbs Ferry: Oceana Publications, Inc., 1973), 15.

problem has been two-fold. On the one hand, many scholars (though certainly not all) have reduced nationalism either to some inherent quality of human nature or to a product of domestic political competition. This reductionism is particularly evident in discussions of ethnic or nationalist conflicts²³ that seek to explain such conflicts as the result of ‘ancient hatreds’ or the purposeful manipulation of political elites. While such explanations may contain kernels of truth, they risk vastly oversimplifying the relationship between nationalism and state political behavior. On the other hand, while scholars have increasingly come to see the nation as socially constructed, this has yet to be adequately applied to questions of political behavior.²⁴ Perhaps more importantly, such approaches have focused almost exclusively on the domestic side of the process – i.e., the production and reproduction of the nation (as social structure) by the practice of domestic agents. The possible role that system-level structures and processes might play in the social construction of nationalism has been largely ignored.²⁵ Not only does this risk overlooking important factors for understanding the impact of nationalism on state behavior, but it also effectively removes the issue of nationalism from serious consideration by many IR scholars.

This dissertation will seek to develop a deeper theoretical understanding of how nationalism influences the foreign policy behavior of states by bridging the gap between IR theory and theories of nationalism. Specifically, it will employ the constructivist approach in IR theory to examine how nationalism is constituted by the international system, and the consequences this has for state behavior. Constructivism provides an excellent foundation for this study because it has sought to challenge the focus of traditional IR theory on rationalism and material structure that would otherwise make nationalism a difficult subject to study. Instead, constructivism focuses on how the social structure of the international system shapes state identities and interests. This will help to avoid the tendency toward reductionism, both explanatory and ontological, that exists in much of the, admittedly limited, literature

²³ In order to differentiate between conflicts that are primarily domestic and those that are between states, I will use the term ‘ethnic conflict’ to refer to the former and the term ‘nationalist conflict’ to refer to the latter.

²⁴ For a critique of constructivist approaches to ethnic conflict, see James D. Fearon and David D. Laitin, “Violence and the Social Construction of Ethnic Identity,” *International Organization* 54 (Autumn 2000): 845-77.

²⁵ An important exception to this is Rodney Bruce Hall, *National Collective Identity: Social Constructs and International Systems* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999).

on nationalism and interstate conflict. Put simply, the argument will be made that nationalism cannot be properly understood as simply a characteristic of states, but must be seen in part as a product of state interaction within the international system. Therefore, the conflict propensity of nationalism is largely dependent on the nature of the social relationships that develop between states and the distribution of ideas and knowledge that provide these relationships with meaning.

The central argument that will be made is that nationalism's influence on state behavior is two-fold. On the one hand, it helps to define the 'national' interests that the state will pursue, including those interests that it will be willing to use force to defend. This sets the basic parameters of the state's behavior, though it may not necessarily determine how it will behave in any specific case. On the other hand, nationalism is a reaction to perceived threats, not necessarily to the state's material security (though this may also be important), but to its *ideational* security. In other words, outward expressions of nationalism arise as states seek to defend their identities – their conceptions of self and the roles such conceptions imply – against challenges from others, making nationalism essentially reactive. From this perspective, nationalism is less a direct cause of conflict than an effect of it. While it may help to fuel worsening relations between two states, its causal relationship with interstate conflict is largely indirect. As such, the impact of nationalism on state behavior is far more complex, and far more variable, than is often assumed.

Defining the Case: Nationalism & Chinese Foreign Policy

In order to determine the validity of the theoretical argument being made, as well as identify potential issues for future research, this project will examine the impact of nationalism on Chinese foreign policy, particularly as it relates to the Taiwan issue and Sino-US relations. China provides an excellent case study for investigating the impact of nationalism on state behavior for a number of reasons. First, it has long been asserted by China scholars that nationalism plays a key role in Chinese foreign policy. Harold Hinton once remarked that “nowhere has anti-Western nationalism burned more fiercely in the

twentieth century than among...the Chinese.”²⁶ As a result, Chinese foreign policy has, since the establishment of the People’s Republic of China (PRC) in 1949, been based on “a strong determination on the part of [the Chinese Communist Party (CCP)] leadership to eliminate foreign influence within China, to modernize their country, and to eliminate Western...influence from eastern Asia.”²⁷ Ishwer Ojha argued that, even during the ideological excesses of the Cultural Revolution, nationalism was an important force behind Chinese foreign policy:

Just as Peking condemns Moscow for subordinating revolutionary movements to cooperation with Washington, so China may be guilty of yielding to a burning drive to thwart the Soviet Union at every step at the expense of Communist solidarity. Peking’s shrill concern for territorial integrity vis-à-vis both the Soviet Union and the United States is indeed a feature of nationalism.²⁸

In the 1980s, Allen Whiting argued that China’s shift to an ‘independent foreign policy’ was rooted in a new ‘assertive nationalism’ that sought “to introduce an emotional and hostile tone to relationships which are posited as historically and fundamentally antagonistic.”²⁹ The 1990s brought a renewed interest in Chinese nationalism – what many have referred to as the ‘new’ Chinese nationalism – among scholars eager to understand China’s role in the post-Cold War world.

Yet the conflict propensity of Chinese nationalism remains an open question. For advocates of the ‘China Threat’ thesis “that an increasingly powerful China is likely to destabilize regional security in the near future,”³⁰ nationalism provides the prime motivating force for China to pursue a more aggressive foreign policy in order to regain lost territory and status. For instance, Thomas Metzger and Ramon Myers have argued that “today [the world order] is challenged by a revitalized China uncomfortable with both the leading position of the United States in world affairs and the Western model of modernity as a combination of capitalism and democracy.”³¹ Similarly, Richard Bernstein and Ross Munro have asserted

²⁶ Harold C. Hinton, *Communist China in World Politics* (London: Macmillan, 1966), 5.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 6-7.

²⁸ Ishwer C. Ojha, *Chinese Foreign Policy in an Age of Transition: The Diplomacy of Cultural Despair*, 2d ed. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971), 143.

²⁹ Allen S. Whiting, “Assertive Nationalism in Chinese Foreign Policy,” *Asian Survey* 23 (August 1983): 915.

³⁰ Denny Roy, “The ‘China Threat’ Issue: Major Arguments,” *Asian Survey* 36 (August 1996): 758.

³¹ Thomas A. Metzger and Ramon H. Myers, “Chinese Nationalism and American Policy,” *Orbis* 42 (Winter 1998): 21.

that “China’s ambitions are fired by a nationalism of historic aggrievement and thwarted grandeur, a nationalism that is strange and therefore little understood in the more satisfied and complacent West.”³² They argue that this nationalism will not only lead to a more aggressive China in general, but to an eventual conflict with the United States in particular.

On the surface such assertions may seem valid. Nationalist sentiments were on full display after the accidental bombing on May 7, 1999, of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade, Yugoslavia, by the United States during the conflict in Kosovo. In highly emotional demonstrations that at times became violent, thousands of Chinese students converged on the US embassy in Beijing and US consulates around the country. Part of the US consulate in Chengdu, Sichuan, was destroyed by fire. Despite numerous apologies and attempts to explain how the accident occurred, as well as promises of compensation, most Chinese continue to believe that the bombing was part of a deliberate plot by the United States. While such a charge may seem preposterous to most Americans, it fits into a perceived pattern of US actions – including the linkage of human rights with trade, continued support for Taiwan, opposition to China’s bid for the 2000 Olympics, and the loss of a Chinese fighter pilot after an in-air collision with a US reconnaissance plane near the Chinese island of Hainan in Spring 2001 – that throughout the 1990s led many Chinese to believe that the US was pursuing an active strategy to ‘hold China down.’ As a result, Sino-US relations have often been strained, and some in the Chinese defense establishment have themselves talked openly about the potential for military conflict between China and the United States.

However, the idea that Chinese nationalism will inevitably drive China to pursue more aggressive policies toward its neighbors or the United States should not be accepted uncritically. Indeed, others have argued that nationalism does not make China more prone to engage in conflict. For instance, Michel Oksenberg has used the term ‘confident nationalism’ to describe the Chinese belief “that through increased involvement in world affairs China can attain wealth and power while preserving its national essence.”³³ Far from leading to more aggressiveness, Oksenberg argued that “its overriding purpose is to

³² Richard Bernstein and Ross H. Munro, *The Coming Conflict with China* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1997), 4.

³³ Michel Oksenberg, “China’s Confident Nationalism,” *Foreign Affairs* 65 (1987): 501.

forge a tranquil security environment in support of ambitious domestic economic development....They [the Chinese leadership] combine a search for military security with a desire to expand economic ties with all potential trading partners. They seek to preserve Chinese sovereignty and autonomy while accepting the constraints of increased commercial and security links with the outside world.”³⁴ Similarly, Yongnian Zheng argues that “the rise of the new nationalism...does not mean that China will become aggressive towards the existing world system....It seems to many Chinese political leaders that only by integrating China into the world system can it become a strong state and world power. What the leadership wants is not to overthrow the existing system, but the recognition of Chinese power and its rightful place in the world system by other major world powers.”³⁵ Thus, whether or not nationalism will make China a greater threat to regional security is a puzzle that a theory of nationalist conflict could help to solve.

The Taiwan issue and Sino-US relations represent particularly good places to begin tackling this puzzle. The Taiwan issue is critically important to both Chinese national identity and Chinese foreign policy. Moreover, it has produced interstate confrontation and conflict in the past, and retains the potential to do so again in the future. China has consistently stated its willingness to go to war over Taiwan in order to prevent it from making its current separation from the mainland permanent. This has put it in conflict with US interests, a traditional supporter of Taiwan (though not of Taiwanese independence). As such, the Taiwan issue has serious implications for Sino-US relations, and provides a potential flashpoint for conflict between the world’s last superpower and a regional giant on the rise. Indeed, both states have already faced off against each other over Taiwan on more than one occasion. The most recent example of this was the 1995-96 Taiwan Strait Crisis in which Chinese attempts to influence elections in Taiwan through military intimidation resulted in a confrontation with the United States. The Taiwan issue is thus an excellent case for investigating the impact of nationalism on Chinese behavior.

³⁴ Ibid., 501.

³⁵ Yongnian Zheng, *Discovering Chinese Nationalism in China: Modernization, Identity, and International Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 19.

A second reason that China provides a good case study is that the existing literature on Chinese nationalism has generally been more cognizant of the role of international politics in shaping its development – empirically, if not theoretically. It has become common to see the development of Chinese nationalism as the direct result of China’s attempts during the 19th and early-20th centuries to respond to pressures from foreign powers, a process one could argue which continues today. As such, the China case provides the evidence necessary for better understanding the role of the international system in constituting nationalism, and thereby, can aid in the important task of theory-building. In essence, if nationalism cannot be shown to have a demonstrable effect in the China case, it is less likely to be an important factor in other cases and may be discarded as a useful explanation of interstate conflict. If, on the other hand, one can demonstrate that nationalism does have a significant impact on Chinese foreign policy, and provide an explanation for how and why it does so, then it may provide important insights that are generalizable to other cases. Thus, the aim of the empirical portion of this dissertation will be to examine evidence to see whether it supports the theoretical argument being made, and to help discover additional theoretical questions that need to be addressed to further our understanding of how nationalism affects state behavior.

Finally, while the primary goal of this dissertation is to develop a better understanding of the effect of nationalism on state behavior, using China as a test case may help to address an important secondary issue as well – the gap that too often exists between IR theory and studies of Chinese foreign policy. Although studies of the subject have increased substantially over the years,³⁶ “with a few notable exceptions, Western scholarship on Chinese foreign policy is open to the...charge [of a poverty of theoretical oversight]. Rich in descriptive analysis, it has produced a low level of comparability and generalization, despite its periodic calls for bridging the chasm between Chinese foreign policy and international relations.”³⁷ As Whiting points out, “research on Chinese foreign policy preponderantly

³⁶ Quansheng Zhao, *Interpreting Chinese Foreign Policy: The Micro-Macro Linkage Approach* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 8.

³⁷ Samuel S. Kim, “China’s International Organizational Behaviour,” in *Chinese Foreign Policy: Theory and Practice*, eds. Thomas W. Robinson and David Shambaugh (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 401.

uses Sinology rather than general theory.”³⁸ Although this has often been justified on the grounds “that China’s unique 3,000-year history of essential isolation locates it outside the purview of any general theory that might be applicable to other states,” James Rosenau correctly argues that “for all its uniqueness, China has long been an actor in the international system and has thus been subject to the same dynamics and controls that are inherent in the system and that condition all states.”³⁹ As such, while studies of Chinese foreign policy often demonstrate a nuanced understanding of China’s specific circumstances, they generally “lack...imaginative and theoretical approaches that could lead to comprehensive and conceptual ways to interpret Chinese foreign policy.”⁴⁰ A more blunt criticism has been offered by William Kirby, who has suggested that “while the study of China’s foreign relations has generally been theory-poor, it has not lacked poor theories.”⁴¹ As Samuel Kim argues

There is a need for more integrated and synthetic theoretical approaches to the study of Chinese foreign policy behaviors in various issue areas, toward major international actors, and across time. There is also a need for more imaginative interdisciplinary approaches that will cross-fertilize and invigorate the field with advances made in international relations and other related social science disciplines. There is, in short, a strong case for moving the field toward new issue areas and theoretical approaches that will relate disparate variables in a more comprehensive picture of the dynamics of Chinese international conduct.⁴²

It is hoped that an examination of Chinese nationalism and foreign policy, through the lens of IR theory, will help to do just that. At the same time, a more consciously theoretical approach to Chinese foreign policy may help to flesh out theories of international relations that have too often been Eurocentric.⁴³

³⁸ Allen S. Whiting, “Forecasting Chinese Foreign Policy: IR Theory vs. the Fortune Cookie,” in *Chinese Foreign Policy: Theory and Practice*, eds. Thomas W. Robinson and David Shambaugh (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 506.

³⁹ James N. Rosenau, “China in a Bifurcated World: Competing Theoretical Perspectives,” in *Chinese Foreign Policy: Theory and Practice*, eds. Thomas W. Robinson and David Shambaugh (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 524.

⁴⁰ Zhao, *Interpreting Chinese Foreign Policy*, 8-9.

⁴¹ William C. Kirby, “The Internationalization of China: Foreign Relations at Home and Abroad in the Republican Era,” *The China Quarterly* 150 (June 1997): 435.

⁴² Samuel S. Kim, “China and the World in Theory and Practice,” in *China and the World: Chinese Foreign Relations in the Post-Cold War Era*, 3d ed., ed. Samuel S. Kim (Boulder: Westview Press, 1994), 11.

⁴³ David C. Kang, “Getting Asia Wrong: The Need for New Analytical Frameworks,” *International Security* 27, no. 4 (Spring 2003): 57-85.

Outlining the Argument: The Systemic Origins of Nationalism in the Taiwan Issue & Sino-US Relations

This dissertation is divided into two parts. **Part I** will present the main theoretical arguments. Since IR theory is to be the cornerstone of this dissertation, **Chapter 2** will provide a brief overview of the major debates in IR theory, and the place that constructivism has in those debates. While it might be argued that such a discussion is premature without first addressing the literature on nationalism and nationalist conflict in order to determine whether such an approach is warranted in the first place, it is necessary to address constructivism first for reasons of organizational logic – namely, the need to discuss existing (non-IR) constructivist approaches in the chapter on nationalism.⁴⁴ The basic tenets of constructivism will be discussed, as well as its applicability to the study of foreign policy. In addition, the importance of combining constructivism with more traditional realist approaches will be addressed. Namely, it will be argued that a ‘realist-constructivist’ approach is more useful for understanding nationalist conflicts.

Chapter 3 will present an overview of the literature on nationalism and nationalist conflict through the lens of the levels-of-analysis problem in IR theory. The levels-of-analysis perspective provides a useful way to organize the myriad theories of nationalism, and shed light on what may be missing. It will be argued that most theories of nationalism, including (non-IR) constructivist approaches, are grounded primarily in either the individual or state levels of analysis (first image and second image explanations, respectively), with the level of the international system (third image) largely neglected. As a result, theories of nationalist conflict often fail to adequately address the effect of the international system on state behavior. Although first and second image explanations of nationalism are not incorrect per se, they may miss key explanatory factors. Therefore, it will be argued, it is necessary to develop an alternative third image explanation of nationalism and nationalist conflict capable of identifying factors missed by other theories – namely, the social structure of the international system.

⁴⁴ It should be noted that while these approaches are constructivist in the broader sociological sense of the term, they do not explicitly make reference to the international system and should therefore be treated as compatible with, but distinct from, the IR approach to be developed here.

Such a third image explanation will be developed in **Chapter 4** by applying (IR) constructivism to the problem of nationalism and conflict. It will be argued that the constructivist focus on structures of shared knowledge made real through social practice is not only consistent with much of the contemporary literature on nationalism, but also that it provides added explanatory value by shifting the focus from largely domestic social forces to international ones. Specifically, nationalism may be seen as being constituted by both the macro- and micro-structures of international politics. As such, nationalism may be understood in two ways – as the political expression of a particular *type* of state (macro) and as a *role* enacted by a state in relation to others (micro) – each of which has important implications for how it influences state behavior. On the one hand, a nation-state may be seen to possess interests distinct from those of other types of states (e.g., national self-determination, protection of co-nationals), setting broad parameters on its behavior. On the other hand, the specific manifestations of ‘national’ interest will depend on the specific role(s) adopted by the state in its interactions with others, and in particular on whether that role comes into conflict with the counter-role that an Other seeks to impose on it. Thus, the impact of nationalism on state behavior is not set in stone, but instead depends on the social structures in which it is embedded and the social practices that reproduce them.

In order to explore what this means, the proposed theoretical framework will be applied in **Part II** to the case of China, and specifically to the related issues of Taiwan and Sino-US relations. Toward this end, it is necessary to answer three main questions with respect to the China case. First, can Chinese nationalism be conceptualized as being constituted by the international system? The answer to this question will determine the essential validity of the theoretical framework being developed; if Chinese nationalism is derived solely from domestic sources, then constructivism (at least in the IR sense) is likely to be of little use. **Chapter 5** will argue that Chinese nationalism can indeed be conceptualized in this way by demonstrating that its development was a direct response to international pressures brought about by Western imperialism. These pressures resulted in the breakdown of the traditional regional subsystem centered around China and based on Confucian norms, and its absorption into an increasingly global system centered around Western Europe and based on norms of state sovereignty. In essence, Chinese

nationalism may be seen as the result of a learning process through which China was integrated into the international system, the outcome of which was a transformation in Chinese identity. Further, it will be argued that the evolution of Chinese nationalism in the 20th century has been directly related to its relations with other states. Of course, these are not dramatically new arguments; China scholars have long been aware of the impact foreign powers have had on China's political development. However, this discussion is necessary to provide readers with a basic historical context for understanding current Chinese nationalism, and, perhaps most importantly, to provide evidence for the initial proposition that the international system plays an integral role in the development of nationalism, thereby demonstrating the necessity for scholars of nationalism to address its role more directly.

Second, if Chinese nationalism can indeed be conceptualized this way, what interests and associated behavioral parameters are associated with its type identity, as constituted by the macro-structure of the international system? In other words, what are China's 'national' interests (as opposed to other kinds of interests) and what patterns of behavior might they produce? This question will be addressed in **Chapter 6** by examining the issue of Taiwan. It will be argued that Taiwan's importance to China can only be understood in terms of the identity China was forced to adopt through its interactions with Western powers – namely, that of a sovereign nation-state. This transformation in China's identity brought about a redefinition of its relationship to territory and its own people that resulted in Taiwan changing from being 'beyond the pale of Chinese civilization' to being an integral part of the Chinese nation-state that must be reclaimed in order for China to be whole again. In essence, China's interest in Taiwan is socially constructed. However, while this sets basic parameters on Chinese foreign policy, it will also be shown that such parameters are relatively broad and allow for a wide range of specific actions.

The third question to be addressed is, within these basic parameters, how do China's interactions with other states constitute it with specific role identities, and what does this mean for the specific ways in which 'national' interests manifest themselves in Chinese behavior? This question will be addressed in **Chapter 7** by examining Sino-US relations, both generally and as they relate to the Taiwan issue. It will

be argued that while China's identity as a nation-state provides it with a core set of interests, how these interests are expressed is largely dependent on the specific role(s) enacted in their defense. Thus, modern Chinese nationalism may be seen as a role enacted as a defense against perceived threats to its self-image. Given the fact that the 'new' Chinese nationalism of the 1990s has often been associated with a significant degree of anti-Americanism, it makes sense to consider the issue of nationalism as role with respect to Sino-US relations. While Taiwan plays a major part in this relationship, other issues in Sino-US relations will also be examined.

Chapters 6 and 7 will provide an opportunity to address some important questions regarding the effect of nationalism on state behavior, and particularly the presumed linkage between nationalism and interstate conflict. For instance, is the belligerence in foreign policy supposedly associated with nationalism inherent to the nation-state (i.e., is it tied to the state's type identity), or is it an emergent property that results from the interaction of states under specific circumstances (i.e., is it tied to the state's role)? In essence, what level of social structure is responsible for the conflict propensity of nationalism, and how conditional is it? Do the two levels of social structure produce different, potentially conflicting, interests that complicate the relationship between nationalism and state behavior? If so, how is this contradiction resolved? Each of these questions is important to developing a greater understanding of nationalism and foreign policy.

It should be noted that the emphasis given to structural elements of nationalism is not meant to discount the role of decision-makers. Although constructivism (in IR) is generally regarded as a systemic theory concerned with how structures of shared knowledge shape state identities and interests, it differs from other such theories in IR in that agent and structure are regarded as mutually constituted; the properties of each are determined by the actions of the other, but are not reducible to them. The continued existence of each is therefore dependent on social practice. As Alexander Wendt points out, "structures and agents are both effects of what people *do*."⁴⁵ As a result, it has been argued that constructivism not only provides a new structural approach to international politics, but also allows for

⁴⁵ Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 313.

the possibility of bringing the agent (i.e., the actions of decision-makers) back in. While this dissertation will focus on developing a structural theory, in part because this is the dimension of nationalism that has been most ignored, the role of Chinese decision-makers will be addressed throughout.

Finally, Chapter 8 will draw conclusions about the utility of a constructivist model for understanding the impact of nationalism on Chinese foreign policy. Perhaps more importantly, it will address the generalizability of the China case to the problem of nationalism and foreign policy, and attempt to identify questions for further research. However, it is important to offer a few caveats about the prospects for developing a general understanding of nationalist conflict from an analysis of the China case. First, it should be noted that Prizel has made the argument that “because the sources of national identity are unique for each nation, and indeed are subject to constant re-creation, each study of nationalism and its impact on a given nation’s foreign policy must be treated separately. Few generalizations are applicable to the international system as a whole.”⁴⁶ While it may indeed be true that the impact that nationalism has on a state’s foreign policy will be highly dependent on the specific circumstances surrounding its identity formation, requiring a detailed analysis of each case, it is the author’s contention that a proper theoretical framework will yield some important, generalizable statements regarding the relationship between nationalism and conflict. However, one needs to keep in mind that such generalizations may be limited.

Second, even if some generalizations can be made, they may not prove useful in all cases. As stated above, the author’s use of a system-level approach to the problem of nationalist conflict is not meant to discount the important role played by domestic politics. The point is merely that the domestic aspect of nationalism is only part of the story and should be considered within the international context in which it takes place. However, it may be that in some cases, perhaps even in most cases, the domestic politics explanation may prove sufficient, thereby making the proposed theoretical perspective unnecessary.

⁴⁶ Prizel, *National Identity and Foreign Policy*, 8.

Finally, it should be made clear that the conclusions in this dissertation about the impact of nationalism on state behavior, and particularly about the impact of nationalism on Chinese foreign policy, are meant to add to, not replace, more traditional factors (e.g., balance of power). For instance, to say that nationalism does not necessarily make China a greater threat to regional security is not the same as saying that China is not a regional threat at all. One might still argue that the growth of Chinese capabilities alone presents a significant challenge to regional stability. In addition, it may at times be difficult to determine conclusively whether Chinese behavior is the result of nationalism or other factors – e.g., power competition; it would almost certainly be influenced by both. That said, it is hoped that the argument presented here will provide a more nuanced understanding of nationalism and state behavior.

PART I: THEORY DEVELOPMENT

Chapter 2. A VIEW FROM THE MIDDLE GROUND: IR THEORY & THE TURN TOWARD CONSTRUCTIVISM

As stated in the introduction, this dissertation seeks to bridge the gap between the fields of IR theory and nationalism in order to gain a better understanding of how the latter influences state behavior, particularly with respect to its impact on the conflict propensity of states. The first step in accomplishing this task is to begin building from the IR theory side of the gap by outlining the basic theoretical approach to be taken. For some readers, this may seem premature, since the author has yet to examine the existing literature on nationalism and conflict to demonstrate why this approach is necessary. However, for reasons of organizational logic – namely, the need to address other ‘constructivist’ approaches to nationalism in the next chapter – it is useful to start with this discussion of IR theory. I therefore request the reader’s patience in addressing the central issue of nationalism.

In order to make the discussion that follows accessible to readers outside the discipline of international politics, this chapter will first provide some background on the main contemporary debates in IR theory. It will then examine what has been called “the constructivist turn in international relations theory,”¹ and the implications it has for our understanding of state behavior. The author supports the view (admittedly a controversial one) that constructivism represents a relatively agnostic, middle ground approach to IR theory, one that allows the researcher to develop a fuller, richer, and more dynamic picture of international politics. More specifically, this study will seek to employ a relatively new variation of constructivism – realist constructivism – that recognizes the necessity of better integrating realist concerns with material power and constructivist concerns with identity. Furthermore, it will be argued that constructivism provides a way to reintegrate the study of international politics, as a whole, and the

¹ Jeffrey T. Checkel, “The Constructivist Turn in International Relations Theory,” *World Politics* 50 (January 1998): 324-48.

study of foreign policy. As such, constructivism provides an excellent framework for understanding the impact of nationalism on a state's foreign policy.

Realism, Liberalism, & the Rationalist Paradigm: Contemporary Debates in IR Theory

Contemporary IR theory has been divided by numerous debates – some major, some minor. While a detailed examination of their entire evolution is beyond the scope of this study,² it is necessary to present a broad outline of the competing views in order to provide the necessary context for the theoretical arguments to be made later. Almost since its beginning as an independent discipline shortly after World War I, the study of international relations has been largely dominated by the debate between realism and liberalism (a.k.a., idealism), sometimes referred to as the first debate.³ Both schools of thought have long intellectual ancestries that can be traced back to Thucydides and Machiavelli, and to what E. H. Carr termed the 'utopian' political thought of the Renaissance,⁴ respectively. While neither represents a uniform set of theoretical propositions, each possesses similarities that make it readily identifiable as a distinct approach to understanding international politics. Realism views international politics as competition among states for power in which conflict is an inevitable part of life. Liberalism views such competition as the misguided product of ignorance and corrupt political institutions; as such, conflict can be reduced and potentially eliminated.

Their conflicting attitudes toward the propensity for international conflict have led most scholars of international relations to view them as representing diametrically opposed perspectives. While this is in many ways true, both also share certain similarities that are important for understanding the progress of

² For a basic overview of many of the debates in IR theory, see Steve Smith, "The Self-Images of a Discipline: A Genealogy of International Relations Theory," in *International Relations Theory Today*, eds. Ken Booth and Steve Smith (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995); and Yosef Lapid, "Sculpting the Academic Identity: Disciplinary Reflections at the Dawn of a New Millennium," in *Visions of International Relations: Assessing an Academic Field*, ed. Donald J. Puchala (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2002).

³ See Yosef Lapid, "The Third Debate: On the Prospects of International Theory in a Post-Positivist Era," *International Studies Quarterly* 33 (September 1989): 235-54; and Ole Wæver, "The Rise and Fall of the Inter-Paradigm Debate," in *International Theory: Positivism and Beyond*, eds. Steve Smith, Ken Booth, and Marysia Zalewski (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

⁴ Edward Hallett Carr, *The Twenty Years' Crisis 1919-1939: An Introduction to the Study of International Relations* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1964), 22.

this debate, and the search by some for alternatives. In their classical forms, realism and liberalism developed from fundamentally different philosophical views about human nature; realists focused on the inherent flaws of mankind, while liberals saw the possibility for overcoming them. Yet with the behaviorist revolution of the 1950s and 1960s came a desire for a more scientific approach to international politics. The second debate, between tradition/history and science,⁵ resulted in a shift in focus from competing, but ultimately unprovable, assumptions about human nature to more testable propositions regarding the factors influencing state behavior. However, scholars differed significantly over what factors were most important. Specifically, they could not agree which level of analysis was most appropriate.

The levels-of-analysis problem in international relations is essentially a question of where to look for explanations of state behavior. As J. David Singer put it,

whether in the physical or social sciences, the observer may choose to focus upon the parts or upon the whole, upon the components or upon the system. He may, for example, choose between the flowers or the garden, the rocks or the quarry, the trees or the forest, the houses or the neighborhood, the cars or the traffic jam, the delinquents or the gang, the legislators or the legislative, and so on.⁶

Levels of analysis have also been referred to as levels of aggregation, since “each concentrates our attention on purportedly causal or contributing factors grouped at a different level of social organization.”⁷ In the case of international politics, scholars have identified anywhere between two and six different levels. Perhaps most commonly, scholars use the three levels adopted by Kenneth Waltz in his study on the causes of war – the individual (e.g., human nature), the state, and the international system.⁸ Since Waltz’s three ‘images,’ to use his terminology, are fairly simple and are generally included in most discussions of levels of analysis, they will be adopted in this study.

⁵ For a discussion of this debate, see Klaus Knorr and James N. Rosenau, eds., *Contending Approaches to International Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970).

⁶ J. David Singer, “The Level-of-Analysis Problem in International Relations,” in *American Foreign Policy: Theoretical Essays*, ed. G. John Ikenberry (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1989), 67.

⁷ Charles S. Gochman, “Understanding World Politics.” (unpublished manuscript), I-5.

⁸ Kenneth N. Waltz, *Man, the State and War: A Theoretical Analysis* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959).

The question of which level of analysis is most useful for explaining international politics has long been a contentious one. Among advocates of a more analytical approach to understanding state behavior there was general agreement that the scientific study of international relations required some variables to be left out. However, “they were diametrically opposed...in what need not be studied.”⁹ As a result, the discipline of international relations split between those that studied foreign policy analysis (FPA) and those that studied international politics (IP) in general. “The central focus of foreign policy analysis is on the intentions, statements, and actions of an actor – often, but not always, a state – directed toward the external world and the response of other actors to these intentions, statements, and actions.”¹⁰ As such, FPA has generally focused on first and second image explanations of state behavior. International politics, on the other hand, was more concerned with identifying and explaining broad, system-level patterns of state behavior than the actions of individual states. At first, foreign policy analysis tended to predominate, at least partially due to the fact that “IP had failed to provide a scientific account of the system.”¹¹ However, as more powerful system-level theories were developed, FPA began to receive less attention. We will return to this issue at the end of the chapter.

Waltz did a great deal to advance the cause of systemic theory. In *Man, the State and War*, he argued that the international system was the proper level of analysis for understanding the causes of war. Twenty years later, he developed his ideas further in *Theory of International Politics*, in which he argued against reductionist approaches to international politics. “A reductionist theory is a theory about the behavior of parts....international outcomes are simply the sum of the results produced by separate states, and the behavior of each of them is explained through its internal characteristics.”¹² According to Waltz, such an approach is inherently flawed because it fails to take into account the international system in which the state exists. “From attributes one cannot predict outcomes if outcomes depend on the situations

⁹ Vendulka Kubáľková, “Foreign Policy, International Politics, and Constructivism,” in *Foreign Policy in a Constructed World*, ed. Vendulka Kubáľková (Armonk: M. E. Sharpe, 2001), 17.

¹⁰ Deborah J. Gerner, “The Evolution of the Study of Foreign Policy,” in *Foreign Policy Analysis: Continuity and Change in Its Second Generation*, eds. Laura Neack, Jeanne A. K. Hey, and Patrick J. Haney (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1995), 18.

¹¹ Kubáľková, “Foreign Policy, International Politics, and Constructivism,” 18.

¹² Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (New York: McGraw-Hill, Inc., 1979), 60.

of the actors as well as their attributes.”¹³ Therefore, Waltz concludes, “one cannot infer the condition of international politics from the internal composition of states, nor can one arrive at an understanding of international politics by summing the foreign policies and the external behaviors of states.”¹⁴ Such theories are incapable of providing a general explanation of international politics.

Instead of focusing on lower levels of analysis, Waltz based his theory on the structure of the international system, which he defined as “the arrangement, or the ordering, of the parts of the system.”¹⁵ According to him, this arrangement is determined by three components of the system: ordering principles, differentiation of units, and distribution of capabilities. The first refers to the degree of authority that exists in the system (i.e., anarchy vs. hierarchy). Waltz maintained, as most international relations scholars do, that the international system is characterized by anarchy – the absence of a central authority. As a result, states exist in a self-help system in which each is responsible for its own security. This forces them to duplicate the successful methods of other states, and therefore perform the same basic tasks. Thus, for Waltz, there is no meaningful differentiation of units in an anarchic system. Since he sees anarchy as a virtual constant in international affairs – what has been called the deep structure of the international system¹⁶ – the distribution of capabilities (i.e., power) is left to explain the system’s dynamics. This distribution changes as states seek to balance the power of other states by increasing their own capabilities or engaging in strategic alliances.

As with the classical realists before him, Waltz is primarily concerned with the role of power in international politics, and argues that it involves competition between powerful states that often leads to conflict and war. Yet his emphasis on the structure of the international system as the main explanation for this led him to be dubbed a ‘neorealist.’ While Waltz was certainly not the first scholar to address the role of anarchy in international politics, his reformulation of realist ideas around the concept of system structure helped to establish neorealism – sometimes referred to as structural realism – as the modern

¹³ Ibid., 61.

¹⁴ Ibid., 64.

¹⁵ Ibid., 81.

¹⁶ See John Gerard Ruggie, “Continuity and Transformation in the World Polity: Toward a Neorealist Synthesis,” in *Neorealism and Its Critics*, ed. Robert O. Keohane (New York: Columbia University, 1986).

descendent of traditional realist thought. Other variants of neorealism share with Waltz this focus on structural explanations of international politics. As such, the advent of neorealism represents a major shift in the level of analysis predominant in much of the literature on international relations.

Liberals responded to the challenge of neorealism by themselves approaching the subject of international politics more scientifically. As with realism, liberalism “moved away from being a general interpretation of the nature of international relations or an idea of overall developments, and concentrated instead on asking a few precise questions.”¹⁷ Specifically, it focused on the role of international institutions in mitigating the effects of anarchy on state behavior, thereby increasing the likelihood of international cooperation. In so doing, it accepted many of the basic assumptions of neorealism, namely that states are the primary actors in international politics and are constrained in their behavior by the structure of the international system, characterized by anarchy.¹⁸ However, instead of anarchy automatically resulting in a conflictual, self-help system, it was argued that international institutions could provide the order necessary to allow states to pursue their self-interest cooperatively and prevent cheating. By accepting most of the fundamental assumptions of neorealism, liberal theorists were able to argue “that institutions are possible and relevant *even* on these restricted [neorealist] premises.”¹⁹

The result of this reorientation was a body of theory generally referred to as ‘neoliberalism’ or ‘neoliberal institutionalism.’ Like their traditional predecessors, neoliberals are more optimistic about the prospects of international cooperation. Yet their optimism is based on a deeper theoretical understanding of the international system, not assumptions about human nature. As such, liberals too have generally shifted their level of analysis to the international system. This shift is somewhat less clear-cut than in the case of neorealism; important areas of liberal theory remain committed to state-level analysis (e.g., democratic peace theory). However, it would be accurate to describe the main realist-liberal divide of the first debate as moving from the individual level to the system level of analysis, with both concerned about

¹⁷ Wæver, “The Rise and Fall of the Inter-Paradigm Debate,” 162.

¹⁸ See David A. Baldwin, “Neoliberalism, Neorealism, and World Politics,” in *Neorealism and Neoliberalism: The Contemporary Debate*, ed. David A. Baldwin (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993).

¹⁹ Wæver, “The Rise and Fall of the Inter-Paradigm Debate,” 163.

how system structure constrains state behavior. In essence, as a result of the second debate over tradition and science, what once might have been considered two diametrically opposed perspectives of international politics have now largely converged. As Robert Keohane has pointed out, “it is crucial to remember that [neoliberalism] borrows as much from realism as from liberalism: it cannot be encapsulated as simply a ‘liberal’ theory opposed at all points to realism.”²⁰

Of course, this is not to say that such a convergence was generally recognized; the ‘inter-paradigm’ debate between neorealism and neoliberalism shaped much of the discussion of IR theory in the 1980s. Yet despite continued disagreements over questions of conflict and cooperation between states, both had come to an agreement on fundamental questions of theory. The result of this convergence is what Ole Wæver has referred to as the ‘neo-neo synthesis.’ “No longer were realism and liberalism ‘incommensurable’ – on the contrary they shared a ‘rationalist’ research programme, a conception of science, a shared willingness to operate on the premise of anarchy...and investigate the evolution of co-operation and whether institutions mattered.”²¹ Similarly, Peter Katzenstein has pointed out that

both neorealism and neoliberalism...express a widely accepted, though problematic, social science paradigm suggesting a three-step analysis. First, there is the specification of a set of constraints. Then comes the stipulation of a set of actors who are assumed to have certain kinds of interests. Finally, the behavior of the actors is observed, and that behavior is related to the constraining conditions in which these actors, with their assumed interests, find themselves. This perspective highlights the instrumental rationality of actors and focuses on decisions and choice.²²

Thus, despite their differences in behavioral predictions, neorealism and neoliberalism represent a common rationalist paradigm of international relations.

As pointed out by Paul Kowert and Jeffrey Legro, this is essentially a microeconomic approach to international politics, with neorealists and neoliberals differing only in the degree of orthodoxy in their individual applications of the model. Neorealism represents the more orthodox of the two, where “social

²⁰ Robert O. Keohane, “Institutional Theory and the Realist Challenge After the Cold War,” in *Neorealism and Neoliberalism: The Contemporary Debate*, ed. David A. Baldwin (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 272.

²¹ Wæver, “The Rise and Fall of the Inter-Paradigm Debate,” 163.

²² Peter J. Katzenstein, “Introduction: Alternative Perspectives on National Security,” in *The Culture of National Security: Norms and Identity in World Politics*, ed. Peter J. Katzenstein (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 14.

behavior and outcomes are a product of the rational choices of individuals who maximize their satisfaction (utility) by efficiently matching available means to their desired ends.”²³ Neoliberalism, on the other hand, “accepts the rational egoism of orthodox [neorealist] theory but accords institutionalized rules a special role in resolving problems of aggregation and coordination.”²⁴ Despite this variation, however, “both...assume that self-interested actors maximize their utility, subject to constraints. In such models, actors’ preferences and causal beliefs are given, and attention focuses on the variation in the constraints faced by actors.”²⁵ In essence then, this rationalist paradigm posits a set of state actors who pursue their own self-interest (exogenously given) within the structural limits set by the international system. It is this paradigm that has dominated much of the scholarship in IR theory.

Yet such an approach to explaining international politics is not without its problems. First, it is divided over the fundamental issue of what interests to assign to states. Neorealists argue that since survival is a state’s top priority, it must be concerned primarily with relative gains, lest a competitor obtain an advantage that threatens its security; in contrast, neoliberals assume that states are more interested in absolute gains. Of course, it should be recognized that both sides hedge their statements to some extent. Keohane states that “institutionalism recognizes the possibility that states’ interests in relative gains will make cooperation difficult. Such a recognition does not involve institutional theory in a contradiction, since the theory is explicitly conditional.”²⁶ Similarly, Joseph Grieco states that “realists have argued that cooperation is possible under anarchy, but that it is harder to achieve, more difficult to maintain, and more dependent on state power than is appreciated by the institutionalist tradition.”²⁷ However, the fact that neither has developed an adequate theory of state interests makes it difficult for them to resolve their differences. This represents a fundamental problem. As Keohane has admitted,

²³ Paul Kowert and Jeffrey Legro, “Norms, Identity, and Their Limits: A Theoretical Reprise,” in *The Culture of National Security*, ed. Peter J. Katzenstein (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 456.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 457.

²⁵ Judith Goldstein and Robert O. Keohane, “Ideas and Foreign Policy: An Analytical Framework,” in *Ideas and Foreign Policy: Beliefs, Institutions, and Political Change*, ed. Judith Goldstein and Robert O. Keohane (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), 4.

²⁶ Keohane, “Institutional Theory and the Realist Challenge After the Cold War,” 275.

²⁷ Joseph M. Grieco, “Understanding the Problem of International Cooperation: The Limits of Neoliberal Institutionalism and the Future of Realist Theory,” in *Neorealism and Neoliberalism: The Contemporary Debate*, ed. David A. Baldwin. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 302.

“without a theory of interests, which requires analysis of domestic politics, no theory of international relations can be fully adequate. Systemic theory is worthwhile, but it can only take us part of the way; and we should be careful to avoid retreating behind it.”²⁸

This brings us to a second problem – the fact that the focus on the structure of the international system leaves little room for explanations of foreign policy-making. In fact, in delineating his systemic theory, Waltz explicitly argues that one should not “mistake a theory of international politics for a theory of foreign policy.”²⁹ For him, they involve different levels of analysis; “a theory at one level of generality cannot answer questions about matters at a different level of generality.”³⁰ Thus, neorealism (and, presumably, neoliberalism) is ill-suited to explaining the behavior of a specific state at a specific time. Such a position has drawn some criticism; Colin Elman has argued that “there is nothing intrinsic to the nature of the concepts and variables employed by neorealist theories that prevent them from making foreign-policy predictions.”³¹ Whether or not system-level theory has anything to offer in understanding a state’s foreign policy will be discussed in more detail later. However, it seems clear that such theories would be more *useful* if they provided insights into the specific behavior of states. Indeed, some have argued that “the distinction between foreign policy analysis and IR studied as a system is artificial, [and] that it can and should be eliminated.”³²

More fundamentally, however, by focusing on the constraints that the international system imposes on state actors, the rationalist paradigm fails to address the possibility that the system may do more than simply punish states for irrational behavior; it may also help to define the character of the state itself – its identity and interests. This would have important implications for our understanding of international politics. A growing body of literature, which Keohane has labeled as sociological or

²⁸ Keohane, “Institutional Theory and the Realist Challenge After the Cold War,” 294.

²⁹ Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, 121.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 121.

³¹ Colin Elman, “Horses for Courses: Why *Not* Neorealist Theories of Foreign Policy,” *Security Studies* 6, no. 1 (Autumn 1996): 47.

³² Vendulka Kubáľková, “Introduction,” in *Foreign Policy in a Constructed World*, ed. Vendulka Kubáľková (Armonk: M. E. Sharpe, 2001), 6.

“reflective,”³³ has indeed begun to challenge the rationalist foundations of the neo-neo synthesis, and has become a pole in a new, third debate – between positivism and post-positivism.³⁴ Reflectivism actually represents a very broad set of ideas and theoretical orientations, which “are united more by an opposition to [the rationalist] view of international politics than by any agreement over what should replace it.”³⁵ It is generally considered to include three main approaches: post-modernism, critical theory, and constructivism.³⁶ Of these, constructivism has gained the widest level of acceptance in mainstream IR theory. In the following sections, I will discuss the basic tenets of constructivism and how it provides a useful alternative approach to understanding both international relations generally and foreign policy-making.

Ideas, Identity, & the Reflectivist Alternative: The Constructivist Critique in IR Theory

Although its philosophical roots are older, the term ‘constructivism’ was first introduced into the literature on IR theory by Nicholas Onuf.³⁷ Since then it has grown into what is arguably the predominant critique of the rationalist paradigm, and along with realism and liberalism has been portrayed as one of the three pillars of IR theory.³⁸ Constructivism is not itself a theory of international relations “but an approach to social inquiry,”³⁹ one that is rooted in “the assumption that the human world is not simply

³³ Robert O. Keohane, “International Institutions: Two Approaches,” *International Studies Quarterly* 32 (December 1988): 381-82.

³⁴ Wæver, “The Rise and Fall of the Inter-Paradigm Debate,” 164. It should be noted that while most scholars refer to this as the ‘third’ debate, Wæver refers to it as a ‘fourth’ debate, with the disagreements between neorealism and neoliberalism representing the third. See Lapid, “Sculpting the Academic Identity,” 8.

³⁵ Steve Smith, “Foreign Policy Is What States Make of It: Social Construction and International Relations Theory,” in *Foreign Policy in a Constructed World*, ed. Vendulka Kubáľková (Armonk: M. E. Sharpe, 2001), 42.

³⁶ I hesitate to call reflectivism a school of thought because it contains theoretical perspectives based on radically different assumptions, but that nonetheless share some important characteristics. See Ngaire Woods, “The Uses of Theory in the Study of International Relations,” in *Explaining International Relations Since 1945*, ed. Ngaire Woods (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 24-7.

³⁷ Nicholas Greenwood Onuf, *World of Our Making: Rules and Rule in Social Theory and International Relations* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1989).

³⁸ Stephen M. Walt, “International Relations: One World, Many Theories,” *Foreign Policy* 110 (Spring 1998): 29-46.

³⁹ Checkel, “The Constructivist Turn in International Relations Theory,” 325. For more detailed discussions of this, see Friedrich V. Kratochwil, “Constructivism as an Approach to Interdisciplinary Study,” in *Constructing International Relations: The Next Generation*, ed. Karin M. Fierke and Knud Erik Jørgensen (Armonk: M. E. Sharpe, 2001); and Knud Erik Jørgensen, “Four Levels and a Discipline,” in *Constructing International Relations: The Next Generation*, ed. Karin M. Fierke and Knud Erik Jørgensen (Armonk: M. E. Sharpe, 2001).

given and/or natural but that on the contrary, the human world is one of artifice; that it is ‘constructed’ through the action of the actors themselves.”⁴⁰ As J. Samuel Barkin succinctly puts it, “constructivists see the facts of international politics as not reflective of an objective, material reality but an intersubjective, or social reality.”⁴¹ Since it does not make specific theoretical claims, it has been argued that constructivism “is largely neutral vis-à-vis dominant paradigms in IR”⁴² and “analytically neutral between conflict and cooperation,”⁴³ an issue to which we will return later.

Of course, since constructivism represents a general approach to understanding international politics, it should not be surprising that constructivists themselves often disagree over fundamental questions of theory. In fact, it has been argued that there are indeed multiple constructivisms that vary depending on the degree to which the world is seen as constructed.⁴⁴ The author will adopt the somewhat more limited “thin constructivism”⁴⁵ put forward by scholars such as Alexander Wendt and Jeffrey Checkel, which “fully endorse[s] the scientific project of falsifying theories against evidence.”⁴⁶ Although such an approach has come under criticism from more ‘radical’ constructivists for not going far enough,⁴⁷ the author believes that this represents a more effective way of exploring the way in which international politics in general, and Chinese foreign policy more specifically, is constructed. In addition, it will be demonstrated in later chapters that such an approach allows for the possibility of linking constructivist concerns for identity and social norms with more traditional realist concerns about power.⁴⁸

⁴⁰ Kratochwil, “Constructivism as an Approach to Interdisciplinary Study,” 16-7.

⁴¹ J. Samuel Barkin, “Realist Constructivism,” *International Studies Review* 5 (September 2003): 326.

⁴² Jørgensen, “Four Levels and a Discipline,” 50.

⁴³ Alexander Wendt, “Constructing International Politics,” *International Security* 20, no. 1 (Summer 1995): 76.

⁴⁴ See Maja Zehfuss, “Constructivisms in International Relations: Wendt, Onuf, and Kratochwil,” in *Constructing International Relations: The Next Generation*, ed. Karin M. Fierke and Knud Erik Jørgensen (Armonk: M. E. Sharpe, 2001).

⁴⁵ Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 2.

⁴⁶ Wendt, “Constructing International Politics,” 75.

⁴⁷ For instance, see Steve Smith, “Wendt’s World,” *Review of International Studies* 26 (January 2000): 151-63.

⁴⁸ For a discussion of the possible linkages between constructivism and realism, see Barkin, “Realist Constructivism”; Patrick Thaddeus Jackson and Daniel H. Nexon, “Constructivist Realism or Realist-Constructivism?,” *International Studies Review* 6 (June 2004): 337-41; Jennifer Sterling-Folker, “Realist-Constructivism and Morality,” *International Studies Review* 6 (June 2004): 341-43; Janice Bially Mattern, “Power in Realist-Constructivist Research,” *International Studies Review* 6 (June 2004): 343-46; Richard Ned Lebow, “Constructive Realism,” *International Studies Review* 6 (June 2004): 346-48; and J. Samuel Barkin, “Realist Constructivism and Realist-Constructivisms,” *International Studies Review* 6 (June 2004): 349-51.

The constructivist critique of neorealism and neoliberalism rests on the argument that the microeconomic approach to international politics taken by both, in which states are seen as acting rationally in pursuit of exogenously determined interests within a given set of structural (i.e., material) constraints, is inadequate due to the fact that it ignores the *social* dimension of the international system and the impact that this may have on states' identities and, consequently, how they define their interests. Instead, constructivists have sought to do two things. First, they have developed a broader conception of system structure by adding an ideational element (i.e., ideas), arguing "that the fundamental structures of international politics are social rather than strictly material."⁴⁹ Second, they have reconceptualized the relationship between agent and structure, arguing "that these structures shape actors' identities and interests, rather than just their behavior."⁵⁰ Each of these points will be dealt with in turn.

Rethinking System Structure: The Social Dimension of International Politics

One of the main constructivist critiques of rationalist theory, particularly neorealism, is its conception of system structure – namely, that it puts too much emphasis on the material aspects of the system. This becomes apparent when one examines how structures are seen to constrain state behavior. The constraints that the system places on state behavior in Waltz's theory do not depend on the intentional actions of states; indeed, as already mentioned, Waltz has little interest in explaining the behavior of individual states. Instead, they depend on a selection effect whereby those that fail to act correctly are eventually eliminated from the system. In other words, states are subject to a process of natural selection similar to that of biological entities. In natural selection, "traits are selected through the fates of the organisms who carry them, not through the selection of traits as such....[It] does not require cognition, rationality, or intentionality, and to that extent it is a material process that operates behind the backs of actors."⁵¹ Thus, the international system operates by placing material constraints on how states may act and still survive. Actors may choose to behave any way they wish, but 'incorrect' choices will

⁴⁹ Wendt, "Constructing International Politics," 71.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 71-2.

⁵¹ Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*, 321.

carry negative consequences that could lead, at least in extreme cases, to the elimination of the state from the system at the hands of more successful actors.

In contrast to this emphasis on material constraints, constructivists are essentially concerned with the role of *ideas* in international politics. This is not all that different from the “tradition of cognitivist research on the role of belief systems and perceptions in foreign policy decision-making.”⁵² Yet scholars in the cognitive tradition, like Robert Jervis, are grounded primarily in ‘first image’ analyses of “decision-makers’ beliefs about the world and their images of others.”⁵³ Constructivism, on the other hand, has sought to develop a third image analysis of how these beliefs and images are socially constructed through the interaction of states. In essence, it addresses Jianwei Wang’s criticism of perceptual-psychological approaches to international relations that “insufficient attention has been paid to the dynamic process of formation and change of perceptions. National images usually are taken as a given and the question of how these images are formed in the first place is seldom asked.”⁵⁴ In other words, instead of focusing on the images held by decision-makers, constructivism focuses on the social interactions that produce them. Thus, while the cognitive and constructivist approaches are similar in that they are both concerned with ideas, constructivists make their arguments in explicitly structural terms. As Wendt points out, “social constructivism is not just about idealism [the role of ideas], it is also about structuralism or holism. Structures have effects not reducible to agents.”⁵⁵ In this sense, constructivism is not that different from neorealism or neoliberalism – all three are system-level approaches that focus on the effects that system structure has on states. In the case of constructivism, however, the definition of structure is broadened to include more than just material capabilities.

⁵² Ibid., 92. See also Richard K. Herrmann and Michael P. Fischerkeller, “Beyond the Enemy Image and Spiral Model: Cognitive-Strategic Research After the Cold War,” *International Organization* 49 (Summer 1995): 423; and Richard K. Herrmann, “Image Theory and Strategic Interaction in International Relations,” in *Oxford Handbook of Political Psychology*, eds. David O. Sears, Leonie Huddy, and Robert Jervis (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 287.

⁵³ Robert Jervis, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976), 28.

⁵⁴ Jianwei Wang, *Limited Adversaries: Post-Cold War Sino-American Mutual Images* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 7.

⁵⁵ Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*, 139.

Constructivists argue that the *social* structure of the international system is at least as important as its material structure. This social structure “consists of the stock of interlocking beliefs, ideas, understandings, perceptions, identities, or what [Wendt] would simply call ‘knowledge’ held by members of the system.”⁵⁶ Shared knowledge – what one might call the distribution of ideas in the system – provides the social context in which actors interact by giving meaning to the material structure of the system. Constructivists argue that “material capabilities as such explain nothing; their effects presuppose structures of shared knowledge.”⁵⁷ For example, Wendt maintains that differences in the way the US responds to the nuclear capabilities of Britain and North Korea can only be understood in terms of shared understandings of amity and enmity, not by referencing the capabilities themselves.⁵⁸ Even the logic of anarchy, so prevalent in neorealist writings, is heavily dependent on the social structure of the international system. As Wendt points out, “an anarchy of friends differs from one of enemies.”⁵⁹ Thus, without a clear understanding of the structure of shared knowledge within the system, it is impossible to predict how states will react to a given set of material constraints.

Of course, this assumes that knowledge is shared at all. As Wendt correctly points out, “it is an empirical question whether actors share any ideas, and sometimes they do not.”⁶⁰ In cases where knowledge is not shared, materialist theories of IR might prove more useful. Yet Wendt contends that

today,...states know a lot about each other, and important parts of this knowledge are shared...States and scholars alike treat these shared beliefs as the background, taken-for-granted assumptions that any competent player or student of contemporary world politics must understand: what a ‘state’ is, what ‘sovereignty’ implies, what ‘international law’ requires, what ‘regimes’ are, how a ‘balance of power’ works, how to engage in ‘diplomacy,’ what constitutes ‘war,’ what an ‘ultimatum’ is, and so on.⁶¹

⁵⁶ Alexander Wendt, “Identity and Structural Change in International Politics,” in *The Return of Culture and Identity in IR Theory*, ed. Yosef Lapid and Friedrich Kratochwil (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1996), 49.

⁵⁷ Wendt, “Constructing International Politics,” 73.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 73.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 78.

⁶⁰ Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*, 158.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 158.

In addition, it will be argued that the absence of shared knowledge can itself be an important factor in understanding state behavior, particularly in cases where preconceived notions of states come into conflict. Therefore, it is important to examine the ways in which knowledge may be shared.

Before this issue is addressed, however, it is necessary to more fully outline the nature of system structure. Specifically, it is necessary to address the issue of what role interactions might play in system-level theory. According to Waltz, a system is composed of interacting units and structure. For him, the key to system-level theorizing is “to contrive a definition of structure free of the attributes *and the interactions* of units.”⁶² Although it is the interaction of states that produces the system, he sees these interactions as unit-level phenomena, and thus excludes them from his analysis. However, Waltz provides little reasoning for this conclusion. As Barry Buzan, Charles Jones, and Richard Little point out, “Waltz...slips into a tendency to deal with the unit level by exclusion, treating it as a catch-all for everything that falls outside his definition of structure.”⁶³ While state properties might clearly be seen as existing at the unit level, both Buzan et al. and Wendt argue that state interactions are far different from state properties. For the former, it is the tendency of these interactions to produce recognizable patterns that allows them to mimic the effects of system structure. Similarly, Wendt argues that “interaction may have emergent effects that are not predicted by properties alone.”⁶⁴ As a result, both argue that state interactions should be considered as a separate, intervening level between the units that interact and the structure produced by that interaction.

However, the specific way in which they do this is quite different, and has an important bearing on our understanding of shared knowledge. Buzan et al. argue that, while patterns of state interaction may be fairly consistent, “Waltz is logically correct to count [them] as unit level explanations and to reserve the term structure for the positional relation of the units.”⁶⁵ On the one hand, they fault Waltz “for constructing an unbalanced system theory by developing a highly elaborate definition of structure, while

⁶² Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, 79; emphasis added.

⁶³ Barry Buzan, Charles Jones, and Richard Little, *The Logic of Anarchy: Neorealism to Structural Realism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 47.

⁶⁴ Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*, 145.

⁶⁵ Buzan, Jones, and Little, *The Logic of Anarchy*, 49.

leaving the unit level as an undifferentiated mass about which it has been all too easy for confusion to multiply.”⁶⁶ On the other, they attempt to solve this problem while still retaining Waltz’s overall scheme. As a result, they divide Waltz’s unit-level of analysis into two tiers, process formations and attribute analysis, thereby continuing his tradition of leaving interactions out of any theory of structure.⁶⁷

Wendt argues that this does not go far enough. Instead, he believes that “theories of inter-state interaction share with Waltz’s view of structural theory a concern with the logic of the international system.”⁶⁸ As a result, he divides Waltz’s *structure* into macro and micro forms. Macro-structures “depict the world from the standpoint of the system.”⁶⁹ Such structures operate “at the level of the *population* of states, not the level of individual or interacting states.”⁷⁰ Waltz’s theory of structure provides a good example. Since it operates predominantly through a process of natural selection,⁷¹ it describes the overall evolution of the system, not the behavior of specific actors. States may or may not respond properly to structural constraints, but they will be punished by the system if they fail to do so.

Micro-structures, on the other hand, “depict the world from agents’ point of view.”⁷² This is the level of state interaction that Waltz ignores. In contrast to macro-structure, micro-structure is concerned with the intentional decisions of actors. However, according to Wendt, this does not make such explanations reductionist. He uses the Prisoner’s Dilemma model from game theory as an example of how the intentional decisions of actors may be shaped by the rules of the game – i.e., the structure of the system. “The actors’ attributes alone cannot explain the result [defection]; what matters is how they interact, the outcome of which is emergent from rather than reducible to the unit-level.”⁷³ This opens the possibility of examining the foreign policies of states from a system perspective, since “interaction-level

⁶⁶ Ibid., 49.

⁶⁷ See chart in Buzan, Jones, and Little, *The Logic of Anarchy*, 65.

⁶⁸ Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*, 147.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 147.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 151.

⁷¹ Waltz also discusses socialization. However, as Wendt points out, his use of it is at best limited. See Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, 74-8; and Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*, 100-03.

⁷² Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*, 147.

⁷³ Ibid., 148.

theories explain not just an individual's choices but the overall outcomes of interaction, which have an inherently systemic dimension."⁷⁴

Wendt uses his concepts of micro- and macro-structures to distinguish between different degrees of shared knowledge – common and collective. “Common knowledge concerns actors’ beliefs about each other’s rationality, strategies, preferences, and beliefs, as well as about states of the external world.”⁷⁵ These beliefs are shared, not just in the sense that each has the same beliefs, but that each knows that the other possesses them as well. “Common knowledge requires ‘interlocking’ beliefs, not just everyone having the same beliefs.”⁷⁶ As a result, common knowledge has both subjective and intersubjective qualities. “Common knowledge is subjective in the sense that the beliefs that make it up are in actors’ heads, and figure in intentional explanations. Yet because those beliefs must be accurate beliefs about others’ beliefs, it is also an *intersubjective* phenomenon which confronts actors as an objective social fact that cannot be individually wished away.”⁷⁷ Thus, common knowledge is micro-structural; it involves the individual decisions of actors constrained by their knowledge of how the other is likely to react.

Collective knowledge, on the other hand, is macro-structural. It represents the knowledge of a group, not necessarily of any individuals in that group. Common knowledge can be reduced to the beliefs of individuals; collective knowledge cannot. Of course, a group cannot actually believe something; groups are not conscious actors. However, “we can ascribe beliefs to a group...as long as members accept the legitimacy of the group’s decisions and the obligation to act in accordance with its results.”⁷⁸ These beliefs may not even be possessed by any of its members. Wendt cites the following example:

In the interest of consensus,...a divided political party might adopt as part of its platform – as its group belief – a compromise that none of its members holds personally, and which in turn helps explain certain macro-level patterns in their behavior.⁷⁹

⁷⁴ Ibid., 149.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 159.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 160.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 160.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 162-63.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 163.

Because it does not rely on the beliefs of specific individuals, collective knowledge may persist for generations and may be extremely resistant to change. As a result, collective knowledge “generate[s] macro-level patterns in individual behavior over time. At the level of the international system, examples of collective knowledge include capitalism, the Westphalian system, apartheid, the Afrika Korps, the free trade regime, and,...states.”⁸⁰

While natural selection provides the primary mechanism whereby structure affects states for Waltz, Wendt maintains that cultural selection may be at least as important in generating various forms of shared knowledge. This differs from natural selection in that, “rather than working behind the backs of actors through reproductive failure, cultural selection works directly through their capacities for cognition, rationality, and intentionality.”⁸¹ Cultural selection may take the form of imitation or social learning. However, before we can address the mechanism of cultural selection, it is first necessary to address the question of what is being selected – i.e., what is it that states are imitating and/or learning? This requires an examination of the impact of social structure on states more generally, specifically its role in constituting state identity. The role that learning plays in this constitution process can then be addressed.

Constitution vs. Causality: The Impact of Social Structure on State Identities and Interests

While the preceding discussion of the social nature of system structure is an important component of the constructivist critique of mainstream IR theory, an equally important component is how the relationship between agent and structure is conceptualized. In contrast to the focus of neorealists and neoliberals on how structure constrains state behavior, constructivists focus on how structure shapes state identity and interests. The difference is whether system structure is seen as having causal or constitutive effects. “The one describes change in the state of *Y* as a result of a change in the state of an independently existing *X*. The other describes how the properties of an *X* make a *Y* what it is....The former is a relationship of ‘interaction’ or ‘co-determination,’ the latter of ‘conceptual dependence’ or ‘mutual

⁸⁰ Ibid., 161-62.

⁸¹ Ibid., 324.

constitution.”⁸² For constructivists, it is the latter that is most important for understanding the agent-structure relationship; the system does not simply cause states to act in a particular way, it constitutes them with certain identities and interests. In other words, states are what they are, and want what they want, because the social system in which they operate defines them that way. Thus, the structure of the international system can be said to have a ‘deeper’ impact on states than simply constraining the choices of rational actors pursuing their maximum benefits; it gives their choices meaning.

The specific processes by which identity and interests are constituted will be discussed in the next section. It is first necessary, however, to address the issue of state identity. Despite the importance of identity in constructivist theory, the term is rarely defined in a clear and consistent manner. In order for identity to be a useful concept for understanding state behavior, it is necessary to define it as clearly as possible. In its most basic terms, “an identity is whatever makes a thing what it is.”⁸³ More specifically, identity can be defined as “the state of being similar to some actors and different from others in a particular circumstance. Identity involves the creation of boundaries that separate self and other.”⁸⁴ Although the term has its roots in psychology, it involves material and sociological components as well, each of which must be addressed in turn.

At its most basic, the material component of identity relates to the physical separation that defines entities as distinct. For instance, the identities of Joe and Sam are rooted in their existence as two distinct biological units. Beyond such a base physical separation, individuals also possess some specific set of physical characteristics (e.g., gender, height, skin color). Such characteristics carry no meaning in and of themselves, but may acquire meaning and thus provide a platform on which one’s identity is constructed. While the salience of any given characteristic may vary over time or by situation, they may also provide some degree of consistency since they will generally be resistant to change.⁸⁵

⁸² Ibid., 165.

⁸³ Ibid., 224.

⁸⁴ Glenn Chafetz, Benjamin Frankel, and Michael Spirtas, “Introduction: Tracing the Influence of Identity on Foreign Policy,” in *The Origins of National Interests*, ed. Glenn Chafetz, Michael Spirtas, and Benjamin Frankel (London: Frank Cass, 1999), viii.

⁸⁵ Ibid., xi.

From a psychological perspective, “identity is a mental construct that both describes and prescribes how the actor should think, feel, evaluate, and, ultimately, behave in group-relevant situations.”⁸⁶ As such, it plays an important role in helping actors to make decisions. This can be summed up as follows:

Cognitively, identities help individuals cope with complex, demanding situations. Identities are self-schemas, mental representations that allow individuals to overcome the inherent deficits in short-term memory or other information-processing capacity by organizing an otherwise overwhelming amount of incoming stimuli into categories based on prior experience. Self-schemas are tools for managing and organizing information about oneself and the self’s relationship to the environment. An identity, then, is the mechanism that provides individuals with a sense of self and the means for comprehending the relationship of the self to the external environment. Identity is an inherent part of cognition, and it makes life more predictable and less inchoate, inexplicable, and random by giving actors more of a sense of how their behavior will affect others’ behavior toward them.⁸⁷

In essence, identity helps to simplify the complexities of the real world by providing actors with a sense of who they are and how they relate to the world around them.

Perhaps most importantly for the purposes of this study, identity has a strong sociological component. On one level, this means that an identity can be shared by members of a group. Through social interaction actors come to see themselves as being part of the same group – i.e., they ascribe meaning and importance to some set of shared characteristics. On a deeper level, however, this involves more than the recognition of similarity. Creating boundaries that separate oneself (or one’s group) from others also requires the recognition of difference. “Meaning is made out of difference. Definitions begin in negation in the designation of what a thing is not. The process of separating a name, a word, an identity, from those surrounding it begins in differentiation.”⁸⁸ This would indicate that “to say that a group of people has a particular identity is to suggest both that they share certain qualities and also that

⁸⁶ Ibid., viii.

⁸⁷ Ibid., viii-ix.

⁸⁸ Anne Norton, *Reflections on Political Identity* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988), 3.

these qualities somehow set them apart from others.”⁸⁹ Therefore, it is perhaps better to look at identity, “not in psychological terms, but as a relationship between self and others.”⁹⁰

For the moment, I will leave aside the question of whether it is appropriate to employ a term borrowed from psychology to explain the behavior of collective entities such as states. Instead, let us assume that states may possess identity and address the question of what form this may take. If identity is taken to mean the separation between Self and Other, then it is possible to conceive of this separation on a number of different levels. Specifically, I will argue that one can identify a macro- and a micro-level of separation, each of which is related to a different dimension of social structure. The reason for this distinction is to take into account the possibility that actors may have identities with a relatively narrow scope that exist within, and are conditioned by, an identity with a much broader scope. The importance of this distinction between micro- and macro-identity will be made clear shortly. However, it is first necessary to define the base on which these identities are built.

Corporate Identity – The Essential State

In order to develop gradations of separation between Self and Other, one must first establish that such a separation exists. In other words, it is necessary to identify and define some essential form of actor, in the most basic terms possible, that can be used as a starting point for analysis. This is what Wendt refers to as corporate identity, which “refers to the intrinsic qualities that constitute actor individuality.”⁹¹ Corporate identity defines the actor as an entity distinct from other actors. “It always has a material base, the body in the case of people, many bodies and territory for states.”⁹² Corporate identity thus carries with it no social meaning; it is simply based on the recognition that an actor exists. It is this essentialist, corporate identity that then acts as “a site platform for other identities.”⁹³ Without such a corporate identity, no actor exists to relate with others.

⁸⁹ Paul A. Kowert, “National Identity: Inside and Out,” *Security Studies*. (Winter 1998/99-Spring 1999), 8:5.

⁹⁰ Lowell Dittmer and Samuel S. Kim, “In Search of a Theory of National Identity,” in *China’s Quest for National Identity*, ed. Lowell Dittmer and Samuel S. Kim (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), 4.

⁹¹ Wendt, “Identity and Structural Change in International Politics,” 50.

⁹² Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*, 225.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 225.

For Wendt, the state represents just such a corporate actor for international politics – “an organizational actor embedded in an institutional-legal order that constitutes it with sovereignty and a monopoly on the legitimate use of organized violence over a society in a territory.”⁹⁴ This is what he calls the ‘essential’ state, a minimalist conception that “does not imply any particular political system, any particular mode of production, recognition by other states, nationalism, or undivided sovereignty....All of these involve contingent forms of state, not the essential state.”⁹⁵ From this perspective, the term ‘state’ can be used to describe virtually any kind of political unit, regardless of whether it is a city-state, nation-state, or universal empire. Each has some property that we intuitively recognize as belonging to a similar form of political organization; they are all members of the same class of political actors. Since such actors can be found in any historical period, Wendt argues that “the state is not an inherently modern phenomenon, and thus, once we have identified its motivational dispositions...it should be possible to develop transhistorical generalizations about its behavior.”⁹⁶

While I would agree with Wendt that one may be able to identify some kind of essential political unit to which we may apply the term ‘state’ in any historical period, I strongly disagree with the definition he provides. As will be discussed shortly, incorporating ideas such as sovereignty into any conception of the essential state incorrectly ascribes specific attributes to it that are not warranted, and risks short-circuiting the constructivist approach to understanding state identity. It seems likely that this was unintentional. Wendt clearly recognizes that there are “dangers in making transhistorical claims, such as projecting contingent features of the modern state backward.”⁹⁷ Yet given that sovereignty itself is generally considered to be historically contingent, it appears that Wendt nonetheless falls into this trap. In order to avoid this problem, I prefer to define the essential state in the terms used by John Ruggie, who asserts that “we can define the most generic attribute of any system of rule as comprising legitimate

⁹⁴ Ibid., 213.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 214.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 214.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 214.

dominion over a spatial extension.”⁹⁸ This better represents the core of what Wendt identifies as the corporate identity of the essential state without ascribing any particular political form to it, leaving open the possibility that different meanings of ‘spatial extension’ and ‘legitimate dominion’ may lead to radically different forms of state.

Type Identity – Historical Forms of State

Beyond corporate identity, Wendt identifies three different kinds of social identity – type, role, and collective – each of which involves a different level of separation between Self and Other, and is at least partially determined by social structure. For the purposes of this study, I will simply deal with the first two.⁹⁹ Type identity “refers to a social category or ‘label applied to persons who share...some characteristic or characteristics, in appearance, behavioral traits, attitudes, values, skills (e.g., language), knowledge, opinions, experience, historical commonalities (like region or place of birth), and so on.”¹⁰⁰ As such, an actor may have multiple type identities whose importance will vary depending on the specific category being highlighted at the time. This is where the importance of social construction comes in. While Wendt argues that “the characteristics that underlie type identities are at base *intrinsic* of actors”, he also sees them as having “an inherently cultural dimension.”¹⁰¹ Thus, type identities have both material and socially constructed qualities.

In the case of the state, one could consider type identity as representing different historically contingent forms of the essential state that arise from changes in the meaning of legitimate dominion over spatial extension. Ruggie argues that in pre-modern times a great deal of variation existed in the spatial division of political authority. In some cases, rule was based exclusively on kinship rather than territory.

⁹⁸ John Gerard Ruggie, “Territoriality and Beyond: Problematizing Modernity in International Relations,” *International Organization* 47 (Winter 1993): 148.

⁹⁹ For Wendt, collective identity refers to the elimination of the distinction between Self and Other with the result that a new Self is created out of the two. While this is no doubt an interesting theoretical issue to deal with, it is not immediately useful to the present discussion. Throughout the rest of this dissertation, ‘collective identity’ will be used more generally to refer to the identities of groups. For more on Wendt’s concept of collective identity, see Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*, 229, 336-43.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 225.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 226.

While “territory was *occupied* in kin-based systems,...it did not *define* them.”¹⁰² In other cases, political space was organized around non-fixed territories. Citing Owen Lattimore’s work on nomads in Central Asia, Ruggie points out that “they did not wander haphazardly: ‘They laid claim to definite pastures and to the control of routes of migration between these pastures.’”¹⁰³ Finally, political authority was at times spatially divided based on fixed territories, but without this authority being mutually exclusive. The example Ruggie uses here is the feudal system of medieval Europe “in which ‘different juridical instances were geographically interwoven and stratified, and plural allegiances, asymmetrical suzerainties and anomalous enclaves abounded.’”¹⁰⁴ Such alterations in “the organization of political space”¹⁰⁵ produced different *types* of states. Each possessed certain material qualities (e.g., people, territory) that defined it as a corporate actor, but gave different meanings to them that defined what kind of actor it was.

This becomes even clearer when one considers the reorganization of political space that occurred at the start of the modern era – the development of the modern state. In this case, territorial authority is fixed and mutually exclusive. The specific location of a given boundary between any two states might be a subject of dispute, but the nature of that boundary is generally accepted. They can be thought of “as vanishing thin lines on a map, so that the state’s spatial extension is precisely delimited. A state is complete up to its boundary, and then disappears equally completely as we cross it.”¹⁰⁶ The position of the author is that this represents a change in the type identity of the essential state. In other words, the modern state is a specific form or type of state, one based on the idea of sovereignty in which the state is the sole legitimate authority over its people and territory. However, given that Wendt has most recently argued that sovereignty is not socially constructed, but is instead a property of the essential state, this issue warrants greater attention before moving on.

According to Wendt, sovereignty involves two different sets of relationships – one internal, one external. “Internal sovereignty means that the state is the supreme locus of political authority in

¹⁰² Ruggie, “Territoriality and Beyond,” 149.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 149.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 149-50.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 148.

¹⁰⁶ Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*, 211.

society.”¹⁰⁷ It is this organizational quality, he maintains, that helps to define the state as a corporate actor. External sovereignty, on the other hand, refers to “the absence of any external authority higher than the state.”¹⁰⁸ Wendt now argues that, since sovereignty is an issue of legitimate authority and not actual autonomy, both its internal and external aspects are essential properties of the state, and therefore should not be thought of as socially constructed. Conceptualized in this way, sovereignty does not require outside recognition, leading Wendt to argue that “sovereignty does not presuppose a society of states. Sovereignty is intrinsic to the state, not contingent. Empirical statehood can exist without juridical statehood.”¹⁰⁹

However, Wendt’s argument here is not only flawed, but contradicts the predominant constructivist view of sovereignty, including some of his own earlier statements. His fundamental point that both internal and external sovereignty are intrinsic to the essential state is incorrect. As has already been discussed, one can find numerous historical examples of overlapping political authorities in which the essential state is neither the ‘supreme locus of political authority in society’ nor legally independent of all external authorities. These are qualities of the *modern* state. Moreover, even if it were the case that all forms of state, modern or otherwise, possess some fundamental sense of sovereignty in terms of legitimate authority, this would make the term too general to be of much use. While the lack of recognition of any outside authority is an important aspect of sovereignty, an equally important aspect is the recognition that other states have the same authority over themselves.

It is in this juridical sense that the term sovereignty is normally used. Sovereignty defines the rights and obligations that states have with respect to one another, and therefore limits (at least in theory) the ways in which states may interact. They cannot *legally* violate the sovereignty of another state. State sovereignty can therefore be seen “as a basic rule of coexistence”¹¹⁰ between states, a social concept that

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 206.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 208.

¹⁰⁹ Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*, 209.

¹¹⁰ Thomas J. Biersteker and Cynthia Weber, “The Social Construction of State Sovereignty,” in *State Sovereignty as Social Construct*, ed. Thomas J. Biersteker and Cynthia Weber (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 1.

helps to constitute a system in which each actor has the legal right of final authority over its own people and territory. As a result, Wendt has argued in the past that, “in contrast to the...definition of international system structures as consisting of externally related, preexisting, state agents, a [constructivist] approach to the state system would see states in relational terms...In other words, states are not even conceivable as states apart from their position in a global structure of individuated and penetrated political authorities.”¹¹¹ The modern state only exists as such because a system of states exists to constitute it that way. Without this set of social relationships (i.e., sovereignty), the state would take on a different form.

Role Identity – Prescribing State Behavior

The final level of separation between Self and Other to be dealt with here involves role identities. A role can be thought of as “identity mobilized in a specific situation.”¹¹² According to Philippe Le Prestre, “the articulation of a national role betrays preferences, operationalizes an image of the world, triggers expectations, and influences the definition of the situation and of the available options. It imposes obligations and affects the definition of risks.”¹¹³ In essence, roles provide guidance for state behavior in specific situations. While type identities remain partially dependent on material factors, “role identities take the dependency on culture and thus Others one step further. Whereas the characteristics that give rise to type identities are pre-social, role identities are not based on intrinsic properties and as such exist *only* in relation to Others.”¹¹⁴ For example, Wendt points out that “there is no preexisting property in virtue of which a student becomes a student or a master a master; one can have these identities only by occupying a position in a social structure and following behavioral norms toward Others

¹¹¹ Alexander Wendt, “The Agent-Structure Problem in International Relations Theory,” *International Organization* 41 (Summer 1987): 357.

¹¹² Peter du Preez, cited in Michael Ng-Quinn, “National Identity in Premodern China: Formation and Role Enactment,” in *China’s Quest for National Identity*, eds. Lowell Dittmer and Samuel S. Kim (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), 33.

¹¹³ Philippe G. Le Prestre, “Author! Author! Defining Foreign Policy Roles after the Cold War,” in *Role Quests in the Post-Cold War Era: Foreign Policies in Transition*, ed. Philippe G. Le Prestre (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1997), 5.

¹¹⁴ Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*, 227.

possessing relevant *counter*-identities. One cannot enact role identities by oneself.”¹¹⁵ For instance, “Smith can stipulate her identity as ‘the President’ any time she likes, but unless others share this idea she cannot *be* the President, and her ideas about herself will be meaningless.”¹¹⁶

The concept of role identity is not entirely new to IR theory. K. J. Holsti made an early attempt to use roles to analyze foreign policy decision-making. He provided a basic theoretical framework for understanding how roles function in international politics, arguing that a state’s role performance (i.e., state behavior) is largely dependent on the interaction between role conceptions and role prescriptions. The former refers to “the policymakers’ own definitions of the general kinds of decisions, commitments, rules and actions suitable to their state, and of the functions, if any, their state should perform on a continuing basis in the international system or in subordinate regional systems. It is their ‘image’ of the appropriate orientations or functions of their state toward, or in, the external environment.”¹¹⁷ The latter refers to outside influences that might influence a state’s role, including “the structure of the international system; system-wide values; general legal principles...; and the rules, traditions, and expectations of states as expressed in the charters of international and regional organizations, ‘world opinion,’ multilateral and bilateral treaties; and less formal or implicit commitments and ‘understandings.’”¹¹⁸ In essence, roles have both domestic and international sources.

Unfortunately, according to Wendt, “despite the fact that the concept of role seems to imply one of social structure, there has been little contact between this literature and structural IR.”¹¹⁹ States may be seen as taking on roles, but the influence that the international system may have in constituting these roles is largely ignored. Holsti states the main reason for this quite explicitly:

In international politics,...the fact of sovereignty implies that foreign policy decisions and actions...derive *primarily* from policymakers’ role conceptions, domestic needs and demands, and critical events or trends in the external environment. Generally, the expectations of other governments, legal norms expressed through custom, general

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 227.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 335.

¹¹⁷ K. J. Holsti, “National Role Conceptions in the Study of Foreign Policy,” *International Studies Quarterly* 14 (September 1970): 245-46.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 246.

¹¹⁹ Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*, 227.

usage, or treaties, and available sanctions to enforce these, are ill-defined, flexible, or weak compared to those that exist in an integrated society and particularly within formal organizations.¹²⁰

Holsti argues that this is particularly the case in conflict situations. As a result, while he is quick to point out that this does not mean that role prescriptions have *no* influence on state behavior, he asserts that the impact of role prescriptions are best seen as “potential and intermittent.”¹²¹ Thus, state roles are essentially considered, by Holsti and others, as unit-level phenomena.

Wendt argues against this tendency, and provides three reasons for considering foreign policy roles as having important structural sources. First, he argues that there “is a tendency in the literature to take certain international institutions and their associated role identities for granted.”¹²² In other words, they are treated as unproblematically ‘real,’ not as products of social construction. For instance, ‘sovereign equality’ is often taken for granted as part of the state’s corporate existence.¹²³ However, as Wendt points out, “the fact that the sovereignty of the modern state is recognized by other states means that it is now also a *role* identity with substantial rights and behavioral norms.”¹²⁴ I argued previously that the sovereign state could be considered as a type of state. However, there is a sense in which sovereignty may also be a role. When the norm of sovereignty is considered legitimate, according to Wendt, “implicit in this legitimacy are identities as law-abiding citizens.”¹²⁵ Thus, when states abide by the norm of sovereignty, one may consider this the enactment of a particular role – that of law-abiding state.

The second reason for believing that role identity is structural addresses how roles may influence the effects of anarchy. According to Wendt, there “is a presumption that the concept of role implies normative integration and cooperation, which are hard to come by in the ‘state of war’ of international

¹²⁰ Holsti, “National Role Conceptions in the Study of Foreign Policy,” 243.

¹²¹ Ibid., 244.

¹²² Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*, 228.

¹²³ Note that here Wendt is referring to the mutual recognition of sovereignty, which he still maintains is socially constructed, not the sort of ‘individual’ sovereignty that he now argues defines states as corporate actors.

¹²⁴ Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*, 228.

¹²⁵ Ibid., 288.

politics.”¹²⁶ However, as was already pointed out, anarchy is what states make of it – an anarchy of friends is very different from an anarchy of enemies. ‘Friend’ and ‘enemy’ are roles that states take with respect to one another, and this may be an inherently structural phenomenon.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly for the purpose here, roles are heavily dependent on “the degree of interdependence or ‘intimacy’ between Self and Other.”¹²⁷ When intimacy is low, then the roles taken by states may be highly susceptible to domestic political influences or other unit-level attributes of the state. However, “when intimacy is high,...role identities might not be just a matter of choice that can easily be discarded, but positions forced on actors by the representations of significant Others. In this situation even if a state wants to abandon a role it may be unable to do so because the Other resists out of a desire to maintain *its* identity.”¹²⁸ Thus, role identity is more heavily dependent on the structure of interactions between states. As will be discussed later in the dissertation, it is the structurally dependent nature of roles that offers the best opportunity for understanding the relationship between nationalism and conflict.

A Word About Interests

The mechanism by which these identities are constituted by the structure of the international system will be discussed in the following section. First, however, it is necessary to briefly address the issue of interests. Part of the constructivist critique of the neorealist/neoliberal reliance on rational choice is that such an approach largely ignores the question of interest formation. According to Martha Finnemore, “aspirations to develop a generalizable theory of international politics modeled on theories in the natural sciences and economics have led most international relations scholars in the United States since the 1960s to assume rather than problematize state interests. Interests across the state system had to be treated as both stable and roughly identical if system-level theory of this kind was to proceed.”¹²⁹ Yet as she correctly points out, “interests are not just ‘out there’ waiting to be discovered; they are constructed

¹²⁶ Ibid., 228.

¹²⁷ Ibid., 228.

¹²⁸ Ibid., 228.

¹²⁹ Martha Finnemore, *National Interests in International Society* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996), 1.

through social interaction.”¹³⁰ It is this process that constructivists attempt to better understand. In essence, the constructivist critique of IR theory attempts to address Keohane’s comment, mentioned earlier, that a theory of interests is necessary for a more complete understanding of international politics; it seeks to explore how interests are shaped by state identity, which is in turn shaped by the social structure of the international system.

The role of interests is an important part of the theoretical story, since “identities themselves do not explain action.”¹³¹ Knowing who a state is does not automatically tell you what it wants. Yet identity and interest are intimately related. “Without interests identities have no motivational force, without identities interests have no direction.”¹³² This is not to say that all interests are socially constructed. Some interests (e.g., survival) may be relatively free of social content. Others (e.g., ‘keeping the world safe for democracy’), however, are likely to have a very strong social component. Moreover, even non-social interests may take on different meanings depending on the social context. While interests derived from an actor’s corporate identity may not be socially constructed, “the content of even these pre-social interests is affected by states’ type, role...identities, which to varying degrees *are* constructed by the international system.”¹³³ What it means for a state to survive, and in particular what is necessary for survival, may vary depending on the beliefs of the state. Thus, while “the state is not a tabula rasa on which any interest can be written,”¹³⁴ the impact that different identities may have on interests must be taken into consideration. This issue will be dealt with in more detail in Chapter 4. For now, let us move on to the processes by which identities and interests are constituted by the international system.

Social Practice & Learning: The Process of Social Construction

We have so far addressed the nature and content of system structure and the fact that this structure constitutes states with certain identities and interests. It is now necessary to address the specific processes by which these identities and interests, and even structure itself, are constituted. Indeed,

¹³⁰ Ibid., 2.

¹³¹ Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*, 231.

¹³² Ibid., 231.

¹³³ Ibid., 234; emphasis added.

¹³⁴ Ibid., 234.

process plays a fundamental role in constructivist theory. For constructivists, agents and structures are never constants, even if they remain unchanged. They are always subject to the possibility that new ideas or beliefs might alter their character, and even when this possibility is not realized the lack of change is the product not of constancy, but of a process of reinforcement and reproduction. As Wendt points out, “structures and agents are both effects of what people *do*. Social structures do not exist apart from their instantiation in practices....[E]ven individuals are just bodies, not ‘agents,’ except in virtue of social practices.”¹³⁵ In order to understand what this means and what its implications are for explaining international politics, it is necessary to examine in more detail the relationship between agent and structure.

According to Wendt, the nature of the agent-structure relationship may best be understood through the concept of supervenience. “Supervenience is a nonreductive relationship of dependency, in which the properties at one level are fixed or constituted by those at another, but are not reducible to them.”¹³⁶ In other words, a relationship of supervenience is one in which the whole is more than the sum of its parts. Applied to international politics this means that while the international system is constituted by states through their interactions, it is not reducible to them. Such a relationship of one-way supervenience between agent (state) and structure (international system) is illustrated in Figure 2.1.

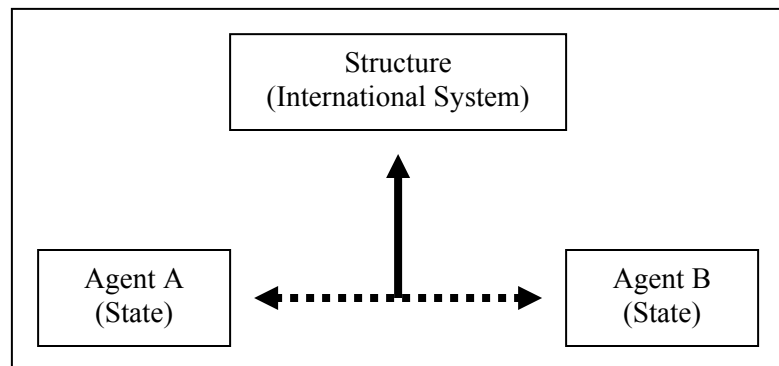


Figure 2.1 – One-Way Supervenience (Waltz)

This is essentially the same

argument that Waltz makes when he states that “one cannot...arrive at an understanding of international politics by summing the foreign policies and the external behaviors of states.”¹³⁷ Such policies may

¹³⁵ Ibid., 313.

¹³⁶ Wendt, “Identity and Structural Change,” 49.

¹³⁷ Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, 64.

produce an international system, but its properties cannot be reduced to them. Although he does not use the term himself, Waltz's theory involves a supervenient relationship between agent and structure.

Wendt takes the concept of supervenience one step further, arguing that the same process also operates in reverse – the properties of individual states, specifically their identities and interests, are constituted by the system, but are not reducible to it. In essence, supervenience is a two-way street, as illustrated in Figure 2.2. The system is created by the interaction of states, as in neorealism, while

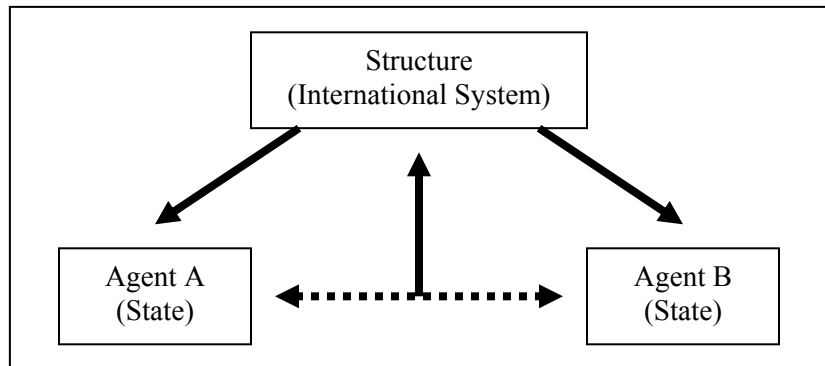


Figure 2.2 – Two-Way Supervenience (Wendt)

at the same time the system ‘creates’ states (i.e., constitutes them with certain identities and interests). In its ‘hard’ version, this idea of ‘bilateral supervenience,’ more commonly referred to as mutual constitution in the constructivist literature, is seen as basically symmetrical. It is this ‘hard’ version that Wendt originally laid out when he argued that agents and structures should be seen “as mutually constitutive yet ontologically distinct entities. Each is in some sense an effect of the other; they are ‘co-determined.’”¹³⁸

However, such an argument contains a serious ‘chicken-and-egg’ dilemma, since agents must in some sense exist in order to interact to form a system while at the same time a system must exist in order to define the agents that make it up. In later pieces, Wendt has attempted to solve this dilemma by introducing a ‘soft’ version of mutual constitution. In this version, he argues that mutual constitution is asymmetric, stating “the properties of states – including state identities – are, to a significant but *lesser* extent, dependent on the properties of the states system.”¹³⁹ This allows for the possibility that corporate actors may exist and interact *before* a social structure develops to shape their identities and interests. Such an argument is in line with his interest in defending “a ‘rump’ materialism which opposes the more

¹³⁸ Wendt, “The Agent-Structure Problem in International Relations Theory,” 360.

¹³⁹ Wendt, “Identity and Structural Change in International Politics,” 49; emphasis added.

radical constructivist view that brute material forces have *no* independent effects on international politics.”¹⁴⁰ We will return to this issue shortly.

In order to understand how such a social structure may develop from the interaction of corporate actors, and how this structure transforms corporate actors into social actors, it is necessary to return to the issue of cultural selection. As mentioned previously, cultural selection involves imitation and social learning. In contrast to the natural selection focused on by Waltz, both of these selection mechanisms are concerned with the intentional decisions of actors. Imitation occurs “when actors adopt the self-understandings of those whom they perceive as ‘successful,’ and as such imitation tends to make populations more homogeneous.”¹⁴¹ This is similar to Waltz’s argument that anarchy leads states to become like units, except that in this case the decision is a conscious one. As a result, imitation may have a much faster impact on the system, since one will not have to wait for unsuccessful states to die off.

Another way in which social structure may affect states is through social learning. This may take one of two forms – simple and complex. In the case of simple learning, identity and interests are treated as constant. Learning occurs as “the acquisition of new information about the environment enables actors to realize their interests more effectively.”¹⁴² This represents an essentially rationalist model of state learning. However, while states may no doubt engage in simple learning, a far more interesting issue for Wendt (and for the author) is complex learning, which he argues has the potential to not only change the way states pursue their interests, but also what those interests are and the identities from which they are derived. Therefore, it is necessary to examine this issue in more detail.

According to Wendt, complex learning occurs through a process of mirroring, in which “identities and their corresponding interests are learned and then reinforced in response to how actors are treated by significant Others.”¹⁴³ In order to illustrate this concept, Wendt outlines a hypothetical first encounter between two corporate actors, Ego and Alter. While they do not yet share any knowledge,

¹⁴⁰ Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*, 110.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 325.

¹⁴² Ibid., 327.

¹⁴³ Ibid., 327.

“they bring two kinds of baggage, material in the form of bodies and associated needs, and representational in the form of some a priori ideas about who they are.”¹⁴⁴ In their first encounter, Ego takes on a particular role, which “involves choosing from among the available representations of Self who one will be, and thus what interests one intends to pursue, in an interaction.”¹⁴⁵ At the same time, Ego casts Alter “in a corresponding counter-role that makes Ego’s identity meaningful. One cannot be a trader without someone to trade with, a proselytizer without a convert, or a conqueror without a conquest.”¹⁴⁶ By doing so, Ego is effectively trying to define the situation as involving a particular kind of interaction. Of course, the same is true for Alter; it will take a particular role and attempt to cast Ego in a corresponding counter-role, thereby attempting to define the situation in its own terms. This introduces the possibility of a ‘role conflict.’ In the psychological literature, this refers to a situation in which “someone is subjected to two or more contradictory expectations whose stipulations the person cannot simultaneously meet in behavior.”¹⁴⁷ In this case, however, it is used to refer to an incompatibility of the role that one seeks to enact and the counter-role that another actor seeks to impose. The implications of such a conflict will be addressed in Chapter 4.

During their interaction, each side acts towards the other on the basis of its own definition of the encounter. In the case of Ego, the action it takes “constitutes a signal to Alter about the role that Ego wants to take in the interaction and the corresponding role into which it wants to cast Alter. Ego is trying to ‘teach’ its definition of the situation to Alter.”¹⁴⁸ Alter’s response will depend on its interpretation of Ego’s actions within the context of its own definition of the situation. As such, signaling is likely to prove extremely difficult if no knowledge is shared between them that can provide the basis for common understanding of the situation. The same will be true for actions taken by Alter; they represent signals to Ego that may or may not be understood. In the absence of shared knowledge, interactions between actors

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 328.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 329.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 329.

¹⁴⁷ Bruce J. Biddle, *Role Theory: Expectations, Identities, and Behaviors* (New York: Academic Press, Inc., 1979), 160.

¹⁴⁸ Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*, 330.

will be plagued by miscommunication. However, if either actor adjusts its ideas about the encounter due to the actions of the other, learning has occurred. Thus, if Alter responds to Ego's signals by adjusting its own role, then Ego has successfully 'taught' Alter its definition of the interaction.

It is in this way that private knowledge may become shared. Any learning that occurred in previous interactions will provide a foundation of knowledge in future interactions and thus make it easier for Ego and Alter to agree on the nature of their relationship. This is not meant to imply cooperative behavior on the part of either actor; they may each agree that the situation is one of conflict, a possibility that will be dealt with extensively in this study. Regardless of whether they agree that the relationship is cooperative or conflictual, this gives the role of ideas in international politics a structural quality "because when states start interacting with each other their privately held beliefs immediately become a 'distribution' of knowledge that may have emergent effects."¹⁴⁹ As previously discussed, this distribution may take the form of either common or collective knowledge, depending on the depth to which knowledge is shared. Learning may lead to a better understanding of each other's preferences, interests, and beliefs – i.e., common knowledge. Since this is simply an interaction-level (i.e., micro-structural) phenomenon, it may be relatively sensitive to changes in the interaction of Ego and Alter. However, learning may also lead to collective knowledge structures whose effects are far deeper, and therefore less subject to change.

In either case, whether a given social structure is sustained or altered will depend on future interactions. Social structures depend on social practices for their production and reproduction. As such, a few words should be said about their susceptibility to change. On the one hand, one must remain open to the possibility that such practices will change over time, leading to different social structures and new identities. If Ego or Alter changes its ideas about the encounter and attempts to cast themselves and the Other differently, the resultant interaction could lead to a change in social structure. Without that possibility, social structure would be unimportant. As Wendt points out, "if process invariably reproduces agents and structures in the same form then it becomes relatively uninteresting: an essential

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 141.

part of the causal story yes, but one that can be safely bracketed for most purposes.”¹⁵⁰ However, this does not mean that social structures are susceptible to every whim in the ‘heads’ of states. On the contrary, Wendt argues “that these [social] facts might not be malleable in some historical circumstances. Indeed, if anything, structural change should be quite difficult. As a self-fulfilling prophecy culture has natural homeostatic tendencies, and the more deeply it is internalized by actors the stronger those tendencies will be.”¹⁵¹ Thus, once knowledge becomes shared, it may be difficult to overcome.

It is important to note that this discussion of learning does not entirely contradict rationalist explanations of state behavior. However, the constructivist approach does have two main differences. First, while rationalists assume “that learning and perspective-taking do not change who actors are or what they want,...[t]he interactionist assumption is that learning and perspective-taking may also change identities and interests.”¹⁵² In other words, complex learning is key. “Over time, as Alter and Ego mutually adjust to the representations of Self and Other conveyed in each other’s actions, their ideas about who they are and what they want will come to reflect the appraisals of the Other, at first perhaps for instrumental reasons, but increasingly internalized.”¹⁵³ Moreover, even if identities and interests remain relatively stable over time, constructivists would argue that “they are being continually *reinforced* in interaction.”¹⁵⁴

Second, the representation that Ego projects on Alter actively constitutes Alter with a given identity, and vice versa. In essence, “through her representational practices Ego is saying to Alter, ‘you *are* an X (trader; convert; conquest), I expect you to act like an X, and I will act toward you as if you were an X.’ To that extent who Alter is, in this interaction, depends on who Ego *thinks* Alter is.”¹⁵⁵ Moreover, since Ego must also attempt to see herself through Alter’s eyes in order to anticipate Alter’s reaction, “she is constituting or positioning herself in a particular way. To that extent who Ego is, in this interaction, is

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 313-14.

¹⁵¹ Ibid., 315.

¹⁵² Ibid., 333.

¹⁵³ Ibid., 333-34.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., 334.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., 335.

not independent of who Ego thinks Alter thinks Ego is.”¹⁵⁶ The same can be said of Alter with respect to Ego; who Ego is depends on who Alter thinks Ego is, and Alter’s own identity is dependent on who Alter thinks Ego thinks Alter is. “What this means is that in initially forming shared ideas about Self and Other through a learning process, and then in subsequently reinforcing those ideas causally through repeated interaction, Ego and Alter are at each stage jointly defining who each of them is.”¹⁵⁷

We have so far determined how knowledge can become shared through the interaction of actors, and how this shared knowledge may constitute the identities of the actors involved. However, as has already been discussed, one can identify two different levels of social structure (micro and macro) and two important kinds of social identity (role and type). It is now necessary to determine the relationship between these different structures and identities. Specifically, it is the author’s contention that macro-structure constitutes type identity, and that micro-structure constitutes role identity. By understanding these dual relationships, it will be possible to develop a more complete understanding of how nationalism influences state behavior.

The posited relationship between macro- and micro-structures on the one hand, and type and role identities on the other, is based on the way in which both levels of structure relate to one another. Macro-structures are characterized by ‘multiple realizability’ – meaning that “there are many combinations of lower-level properties or *interactions* that will realize the same macro-state.”¹⁵⁸ Macro-structures are not reducible to micro-structures; they provide the structural parameters within which micro-structures operate. Thus, “structures of collective knowledge and the patterns of behavior to which they give rise do not by definition change simply because their elements have changed.”¹⁵⁹ Changes may occur in the interactions of states, but this will not necessarily alter the deeper social structure of the international system.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., 335.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., 335.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., 152; emphasis added.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., 164.

The same may be argued for type and role identities. Roles are a function of the relationship between Self and Other, and as such may be subject to change as the interactions between them changes. Moreover, the role that a state takes on may vary depending on the Other with which it is interacting. Such identities are far more narrow and specific than the type of state involved in the interaction. Since it is based on the deeper macro-structure of the system, a state's type identity is likely to remain relatively stable over time, while its various roles fluctuate with its interactions. As a result, changes in macro-structure (i.e., type identity) are likely to produce fundamental changes in international politics. For instance, Hendrik Spruyt argues "that unit change imposes a particular structure on international relations. The structure of the system is also determined by the particular *type of unit* that dominates the system in a given historical period. Such structure is not derivative of the interactions between units, nor is it an aggregation of unit-level attributes."¹⁶⁰ The implications of this argument will be made clear in Chapter 4, where the constructivist concepts discussed above will be applied to the issue of nationalism and its impact on state behavior.

Realist Constructivism: Reconsidering the Importance of Power

Before moving on to discuss constructivism and foreign policy, it is necessary to consider one more element of the learning process – material power. Given the general constructivist view of international politics as being "ideas all the way down,"¹⁶¹ this may seem to be at best an unnecessary detour on the route toward a constructivist theory of nationalist conflict, or at worst a wholesale sellout of constructivism itself. However, despite his emphasis on social structure, Wendt does not fully discount the importance of material power. As he puts it, "the claim is *not* that ideas are more important than power and interest, or that they are autonomous from power and interest....The claim is rather that power and interest have the effects they do in virtue of the ideas that make them up."¹⁶² In contrast to his earlier position, he now maintains (not uncontroversially) that "it cannot be ideas all the way down because

¹⁶⁰ Hendrik Spruyt, *The Sovereign State and Its Competitors: An Analysis of Systems Change* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 17.

¹⁶¹ Wendt, "Constructing International Politics," 74.

¹⁶² Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*, 135.

scientific realism shows that ideas are based on and are regulated by an independently existing physical reality.”¹⁶³ One could make the claim that gravity is simply a socially constructed concept that constrains our ability to leave the Earth’s surface only because we continue to ‘practice’ it. However, acting upon such a claim by jumping from the roof of a tall building would certainly have an effect independent of whether or not society agreed with it. In the end, physical reality does play a role.

For Wendt, this rump materialism is “less important and interesting than the contexts of meaning that human beings construct around them.”¹⁶⁴ As he notes, “the material fact that Germany has more military power than Denmark imposes physical limits on Danish foreign policy toward Germany, but those limits will be irrelevant to their interaction if neither could contemplate war with the other.”¹⁶⁵ In essence, material conditions, such as power, simply set the parameters for what is possible; ideas determine how states will act within those parameters. Yet a number of scholars have begun to recognize the necessity of integrating constructivist concerns with identity and realist concerns with power. For instance, Henry Nau argues that realism and constructivism are both incomplete.

Realist theories, which argue that power positioning overrides cultural self-identification, do not deal effectively with revisionist states...whose self-image rejects the status quo and seeks to maximize, not balance, power. On the other hand, constructivist theories, which argue that national self-images drive foreign policy irrespective of external power positions, do not deal adequately with performance or outcomes. Some self-images work better in the ‘real world’ than others....Self-images motivate power, but they are also subject to it. To evaluate outcomes, relative power remains a necessary exogenous factor, not a wholly endogenous product of interpretation, as some constructivist approaches maintain.¹⁶⁶

He therefore makes the case for “combining the realist and constructivist variables of power and identity.”¹⁶⁷ Similarly, J. Samuel Barkin argues that claims made by both sides that realism and constructivism are inherently incompatible are incorrect, and suggests the possibility of ‘realist constructivism’ (in contrast to ‘idealist constructivism’) that “would look at the way in which power

¹⁶³ Ibid., 110.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., 136.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., 112.

¹⁶⁶ Henry R. Nau, “Identity and the Balance of Power in Asia,” in *International Relations Theory and the Asia-Pacific*, eds. G. John Ikenberry and Michael Mastanduno. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 214.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., 214.

structures affect patterns of normative change in international relations and, conversely, the way in which a particular set of norms affect power structures.”¹⁶⁸

This study will adopt the realist constructivist approach, not just because it is primarily interested in the issue of nationalist conflict, but also because the social structures associated with nationalism, particularly in the case of China, cannot be divorced from considerations of material power. In particular, power can have an important impact on the outcome of social learning. Wendt points out that in the process of social learning “power relations play a crucial role in determining the direction in which this evolution unfolds. In order for an interaction to succeed, in the sense that actors bring their beliefs enough into line that they can play the same game, each side tries to get the other to see things its way. They do so by rewarding behaviors that support their definition of the situation, and punishing those that do not....[W]here there is an imbalance of relevant material capability social acts will tend to evolve in the direction favored by the more powerful.”¹⁶⁹ In essence, if the states concerned have relatively equal power, one might expect them to converge on a new set of ideas and understandings – a synthesis of their previous positions. On the other hand, if the states concerned have unequal power, the less powerful state may be forced to adopt the ideas and understandings of the other – assimilation of one state by another. Citing Karl Deutsch, Wendt suggests that “power can be seen as ‘the ability to afford not to learn.’”¹⁷⁰ We will return to this issue in Chapter 4.

Bringing the Agent Back In: Constructivism & Foreign Policy Analysis

The central goal of this study is to use constructivist theory to examine the systemic impact of nationalism on foreign policy behavior. Therefore, before moving on to discuss theories of nationalism and nationalist conflict – a necessary prelude to developing such an approach – it is first important to revisit the disciplinary divide between IP and FPA discussed earlier. Specifically, it is necessary to address the question of whether a systemic approach, such as constructivism, can be used to explain

¹⁶⁸ J. Samuel Barkin, “Realist Constructivism,” *International Studies Review* 5 (September 2003): 337.

¹⁶⁹ Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*, 331.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 331.

and/or predict foreign policy behavior. As previously mentioned, the desire in the 1950s to develop a more scientific approach to international relations produced a split in the field between those that focused on the level of the international system (IP) and those that focused on the level of the state (FPA). Singer compared the advantages and disadvantages of the system and state levels of analysis in terms of their descriptive, explanatory, and predictive capabilities as follows:

In terms of description we find that the systemic level produces a more comprehensive and total picture of international relations than does the national or subsystemic level. On the other hand, the atomized and less coherent image produced by the lower level of analysis is somewhat balanced by its richer detail, greater depth, and more intensive portrayal. As to explanation, there seems little doubt that the subsystemic or actor orientation is considerably more fruitful, permitting as it does a more thorough investigation of the processes by which foreign policies are made....And in terms of prediction, both orientations seem to offer a similar degree of promise. Here the issue is a function of what we seek to predict.¹⁷¹

Of course, as already mentioned, Waltz argued that systemic theories were far better at explaining international politics than reductionist (i.e., subsystemic) theories. Yet it is important to recognize the basis for his reasoning, and the limits he put on the explanatory abilities of his theory.

Waltz does not attempt to develop an all-encompassing theory of international relations. Instead, he is simply interested in explaining “some big, important, and enduring patterns.”¹⁷² It is for this reason that he argues against explanations based on the ever-changing characteristics of individual states. “Low-level explanations are repeatedly defeated, for the similarity and repetition of international outcomes persist despite wide variations in the attributes and in the interactions of the agents that supposedly cause them.”¹⁷³ This should not be construed as suggesting that subsystemic factors have *no* impact on the actions of individual states. Indeed, Waltz recognizes that “nations change in form and in purpose; technological advances are made; weaponry is radically transformed; alliances are forged and disrupted. These are changes within systems, and such changes help to explain variations in international-political outcomes.”¹⁷⁴ He is simply uninterested in explaining such variations. In essence, while unit-level

¹⁷¹ Singer, “The Levels-of-Analysis Problem in International Relations,” 76.

¹⁷² Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, 70.

¹⁷³ Ibid., 67.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., 67.

factors may influence the behavior of individual states, Waltz prefers to focus on the system-level factors that influence the behavior of all states.

As such, Waltz provides justification for the split between the study of international politics, as a whole, and the study of foreign policy. For him, a theory of international politics and a theory of foreign policy are intended to do two very different things. “Systems theories [theories of international politics] explain why different units behave similarly and, despite their variations, produce outcomes that fall within expected ranges. Conversely, theories at the unit level [theories of foreign policy] tell us why different units behave differently despite their similar placement in a system.”¹⁷⁵ As a result, he argues that the value of a system-level theory for understanding the foreign policy behavior of states is rather limited. “A theory of international politics bears on the foreign policies of nations while claiming to explain only certain aspects of them. It can tell us what international conditions national policies have to cope with. To think that a theory of international politics can in itself say how the coping is likely to be done is the opposite of the reductionist error.”¹⁷⁶

If Waltz is correct, then one might consider it a mistake to attempt to apply a system-level theory to the study of nationalism’s impact on foreign policy. However, not everyone agrees with his position. In his debate with Waltz over the application of neorealism to foreign policy,¹⁷⁷ Elman argues that Waltz incorrectly assumes that “there is a *necessary* correspondence between the independent and dependent variables’ levels of analysis.”¹⁷⁸ In essence, a theory of international politics can be distinguished from a theory of foreign policy, not only by the difference in the level of analysis of their dependent variables, but also by the level of analysis of their independent variables. For a theory of international politics, this means that the system-level dependent variable (e.g., aggregate state behavior) is to be explained by system-level independent variables (e.g., anarchy). For a theory of foreign policy, the unit-level

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., 72.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., 72.

¹⁷⁷ See Elman, “Horses for Courses”; Kenneth N. Waltz, “International Politics Is Not Foreign Policy,” *Security Studies* 6, no. 1 (Autumn 1996): 54-7; and Colin Elman, “Cause, Effect, and Consistency: A Response to Kenneth Waltz,” *Security Studies* 6, no. 1 (Autumn 1996): 58-61.

¹⁷⁸ Elman, “Cause, Effect, and Consistency,” 59.

dependent variable (e.g., individual state behavior) is to be explained by unit-level independent variables (e.g., domestic politics). However, Elman argues that “categorizing theories of international politics and foreign policy by their independent variables is nonsensical.”¹⁷⁹ It is entirely possible to develop theories of international politics that include unit-level independent variables (e.g., democratic peace theory) or theories of foreign policy that include system-level independent variables (e.g., neorealist discussions of military doctrine).¹⁸⁰

If this is true for neorealism, then it is even truer for constructivism. In general, constructivists take a dim view of the division between international politics and foreign policy. As Kubáľková points out, “most constructivists believe that the FPA/IP split need not have occurred and that constructivism provides the tools for putting the two fields back together.”¹⁸¹ This is due to the way constructivists conceptualize the agent-structure relationship. Since they are mutually constituted, “agent and structure should never be torn apart nor should one be given priority over the other.”¹⁸² Despite this theoretical perspective, however, many constructivists have tended to focus on structures at the expense of agents, leading Checkel to claim that “agency has fallen through the ontological cracks.”¹⁸³ He offers three reasons for this: the reliance by many constructivists on sociological institutionalism, the focus on the role of norms in shaping state behavior, and the influence of Wendt, who has specifically advocated constructivism as a system-level approach.¹⁸⁴ “The result,” according to Checkel, “is that constructivism, while good at the macrofoundations of behavior and identity (norms, social context), is very weak on the microlevel. It fails to explore systematically how norms connect with agents.”¹⁸⁵

Others who support a ‘thicker’ version of social construction attribute the problem to the attempt by scholars such as Wendt to treat constructivism as a bridge between positivist and reflectivist

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., 59.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., 59.

¹⁸¹ Kubáľková, “Foreign Policy, International Politics, and Constructivism,” 15.

¹⁸² Ibid., 19.

¹⁸³ Checkel, “The Constructivist Turn in International Relations Theory,” 341.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., 341.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., 342.

approaches to social science.¹⁸⁶ Steve Smith argues that because of the prominence of Wendt's 'thin' approach, "the radical possibilities promised by social construction are in danger of being hijacked by a mainstream that can assign to it an unthreatening role of being an adjunct explanation for those things that the positivist mainstream finds difficult to explain."¹⁸⁷ Smith goes so far as to claim that constructivism, at least in its modernist form, is much closer to the rationalist approaches it seeks to criticize than to the reflectivist approaches with which it claims to share a common ontological perspective.¹⁸⁸ In particular, Smith is critical of Wendt's continued utilization of a state-centric model of international politics.¹⁸⁹ Both of these issues – Wendt's almost exclusive focus on system structure and his consequent acceptance of the state as the primary unit of analysis – need to be addressed in more detail.

Like Elman, Wendt distinguishes "two senses in which a theory might be considered 'systemic': when it makes the international system the dependent variable, and when it makes the international system the independent variable."¹⁹⁰ With respect to the former, Wendt argues that there is indeed a difference between theories of international politics and theories of foreign policy. "It is important that IR do both kinds of theorizing, but their dependent variables, aggregate behavior versus unit behavior, are on different levels of analysis and so their explanations are not comparable. Their relationship is complementary rather than competitive."¹⁹¹ Despite his criticism of neorealists and neoliberals for discounting the way in which the international system constitutes states with particular identities and interests, "explaining state identities and interests is not [his] main goal."¹⁹² Like Waltz, he remains concerned with understanding the international system. Yet, like Elman, he leaves open the possibility that one could examine foreign policy systemically by treating the international system as an independent variable. Such a theory would be systemic in the sense that "it emphasizes the causal powers of the

¹⁸⁶ For a detailed critique of Wendt's bridging efforts, see Smith, "Wendt's World." See also Emanuel Adler, "Seizing the Middle Ground: Constructivism in World Politics," *European Journal of International Relations* 3 (September 1997): 319-63.

¹⁸⁷ Smith, "Foreign Policy Is What States Make of It," 39.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid., 45. Adler makes the same claim, but sees this as an advantage for modernist constructivism; see Adler, "Seizing the Middle Ground."

¹⁸⁹ Ibid., 49-51.

¹⁹⁰ Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*, 11.

¹⁹¹ Ibid., 11.

¹⁹² Ibid., 11.

structure of the international system in explaining state behavior....The behavior in question might be unit or aggregate; the systemic-reductionist distinction is usually only invoked among theories of international politics, but it could also be applied to theories of foreign policy.”¹⁹³ As such, while constructivism may be a system-level approach to understanding international relations, nothing prevents it from being used to explain how the international system influences the foreign policy behavior of individual states. It is simply necessary to consider the fact that the identities and interests that shape state behavior are not solely the product of constitution at the international level; a role remains for agents, even if Wendt himself prefers to focus his attention on structure.

This brings us back to Smith’s criticism that Wendt is overly focused on the state as the primary unit of analysis. The central question is this – when we discuss the agent-structure relationship, who or what is the agent? In other words, can states be treated as corporate actors that possess identities and interests, or can these qualities only be ascribed to human beings? According to Wendt, the answer to these questions depends on how one perceives the ontological status of the state, whether one is a nominalist or a scientific realist. For nominalists, “corporate agency is just a useful fiction or metaphor to describe what is ‘really’ the actions of individuals.”¹⁹⁴ For scientific realists, on the other hand, corporate agency “refers to a real, emergent phenomenon which cannot be reduced to individuals.”¹⁹⁵ Wendt sees both as being problematic. On the one hand, the state is unobservable; “individuals may say they belong to the same organization, and engage in collective action to prove it, but we never actually see the state.”¹⁹⁶ On the other hand, while we may recognize that states do not in reality ‘make’ decisions, “we routinely explain their behavior as the ‘behavior’ of corporate agents, and these explanations *work* in the sense that they enable us to make reliable predictions about individuals.”¹⁹⁷ Yet while he recognizes these problems, Wendt argues that the scientific realist approach to the problem is far more useful.

¹⁹³ Ibid., 11-2.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid., 215.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., 215.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid., 216.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid., 216.

For Wendt, the state does not have to be observable in order to be treated as a ‘real’ corporate actor. “Like quarks, capitalism, and preferences, we know that states are real because their structure generates a pattern of observable effects, as anyone who denies their reality will quickly find out.”¹⁹⁸ Perhaps more importantly, these patterns of behavior are not reducible to the actions of the individuals that comprise the state. As Wendt points out, “we normally think of states as persisting through time despite generational turnover, in part because their properties seem quite stable: boundaries, symbols, national interests, foreign policies, and so on. Such continuities help give temporal continuity to the succession of governments, enabling us to call every national government in Washington, DC for 200 years a ‘US’ government.”¹⁹⁹ This is not to say that states themselves never change; it is obvious that boundaries, interests, and policies do change to some extent over time. The point is merely that such changes generally occur within a set of parameters that allows one to still identify a state as being the same actor, or that when such changes are drastic enough (e.g., the collapse of the Soviet Union) the identity of the state changes as well. In addition, since the identities and interests of individuals will be constituted by the state, “we cannot make sense of the actions of governments apart from the structures of states that constitute them as meaningful.”²⁰⁰

As a result, Wendt argues that the state-centric approach to international politics common to most theories is perfectly acceptable. Indeed, he argues that since “states are still the primary medium through which the effects of other actors on the regulation of violence are channeled into the world system...it makes no more sense to criticize a theory of international politics as ‘state-centric’ than it does to criticize a theory of forests for being ‘tree-centric.’”²⁰¹ However, since Wendt is primarily concerned with developing theories of international politics, it is necessary to address what the state as corporate actor means for understanding foreign policy. Is it appropriate to treat the state as a *unitary* corporate actor, constituted within a given social structure at the international level, for purposes of foreign policy

¹⁹⁸ Ibid., 216.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid., 217.

²⁰⁰ Ibid., 217.

²⁰¹ Ibid., 9.

analysis? The answer is almost certainly ‘no.’ Wendt recognizes “that corporate agents are less unitary than individual ones....[B]iology gives their bodies more coherence, and constrains their action to a greater extent, than is the case for the discursively constituted state.”²⁰² Thus, while it may be appropriate to treat states as corporate actors for purposes of theorizing about international politics as a whole, analyzing the foreign policies of individual states may require more attention to the ‘noise’ of domestic politics.

How then can one apply constructivism to foreign policy analysis? The answer lies in the fact that the state represents a nexus between two different agent-structure relationships. On the one hand, it is an agent constituted by the structure of the international system. On the other hand, it is a structure that constitutes its own agents (i.e., domestic political actors) with identity and interests. It is, for lack of a better term, a structural agent. Thus, instead of a two-level agent-structure relationship, we can conceive of a three-level relationship between agent (domestic political actors), structural agent (state), and structure (international system), represented in Figure 2.3. In essence, this is simply a reformulation of

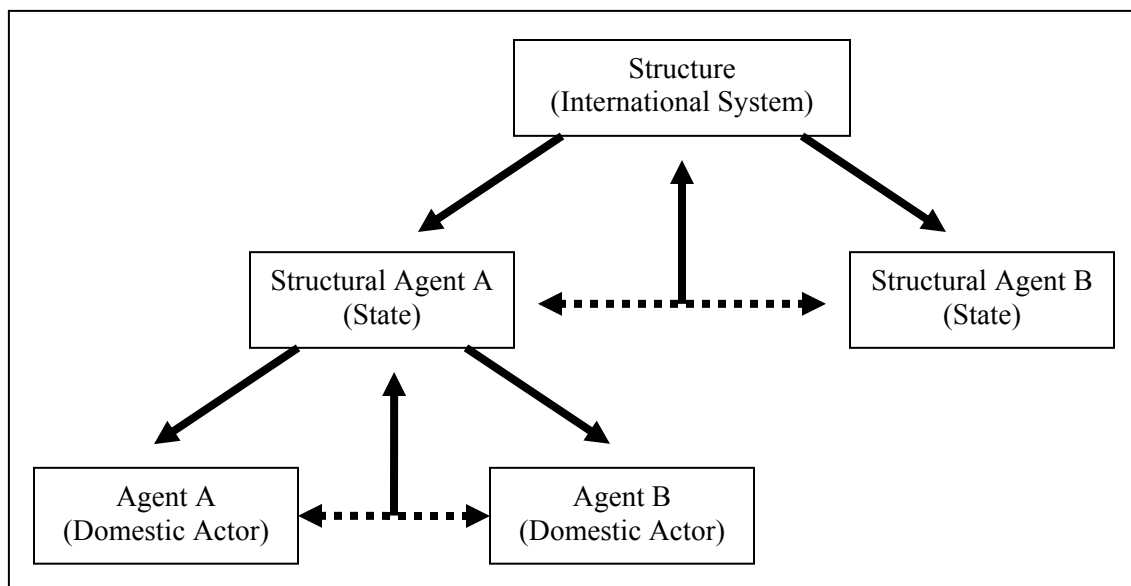


Figure 2.3 – Three-Level Supervenience

the levels-of-analysis issue, but with the recognition that there is a more dynamic, constitutive relationship between the levels, such that they cannot be fully separated. The social structure of the

²⁰² Ibid., 221-22.

international system constitutes states with particular identities and interests, which in turn act to reproduce the system through their interactions; while the state constitutes domestic actors with particular identities and interests, which in turn act to reproduce the state through their interactions.²⁰³

Therefore, in order to develop a more complete picture of a state's foreign policy, within a constructivist framework, it would be necessary to examine both sets of mutually constitutive relationships. On the one hand, how are the state's identity and interests constituted by the system, and what impact does this have on its behavior? Also, how do states learn new identities and interests in the first place? On the other hand, how are the state's identity and interests constituted by the actions of competing domestic political actors? Thus, while the system may constitute a state actor with certain identities and interests, they are likely to remain at least partially contested at the domestic level, leaving open the possibility that the state's foreign policy behavior will depend on precisely how the identities and interests imposed on it by the system are interpreted. While this project is primarily concerned with the first set of questions involving the role of social structure in constituting a state's identity and interests, it will begin to address the second set of questions regarding the role of domestic actors (e.g., political elites) in implementing them as well. Before we continue to develop a constructivist approach to understanding the impact of nationalism on state behavior, it is first necessary to examine the issue of nationalism. This will be addressed in the next chapter.

²⁰³ The question of whether domestic actors are or can be constituted directly by the international system, and/or directly act or can act to reproduce the system, without the state as an intervening level, will be left for future debate.

Chapter 3. CONTENDING IMAGES OF NATIONALIST CONFLICT: A LEVELS-OF-ANALYSIS APPROACH TO UNDERSTANDING NATIONALISM & ITS CONSEQUENCES

The next step in bridging the gap between IR theory and nationalism is to address the issue of nationalism itself, as well as existing theories of nationalist conflict. This task is made difficult by what Clifford Geertz has referred to as “the stultifying aura of conceptual ambiguity that surrounds the terms ‘nation,’ ‘nationality,’ and ‘nationalism’.”¹ As the 19th century British constitutional scholar, Walter Bagehot, once wrote, “we know what [a nation] is when you do not ask us, but we cannot very quickly explain or define it.”² Extensive study on the subject has done very little to change this; the nation remains as “tantalisingly ambiguous”³ as ever. Indeed, Walker Connor has argued that decades of research have not only failed to solve this problem, but have actually made it worse as “the linguistic jungle that encapsules the concept of nationalism has only grown more dense.”⁴ As such, Eric Hobsbawm has concluded that “the chief characteristic of [the nation] is that...no satisfactory criterion can be discovered for deciding which of the many human collectivities should be labeled in this way.”⁵

Given this state of affairs, it should perhaps not be surprising that, as mentioned in Chapter 1, the question of what nationalism is has tended to overshadow the question of what its political effects are. Yet while the author’s main purpose is to address the latter issue of effect, the former question of what nationalism is cannot be left unanswered, since how we conceive of nationalism will inevitably have serious consequences for how we explain its effects on state behavior. This chapter will therefore seek to

¹ Clifford Geertz, “The Integrative Revolution: Primordial Sentiments and Civil Politics in the New States,” in *Old Societies and New States: The Quest for Modernity in Asia and Africa*, ed. Clifford Geertz (New York: The Free Press, 1963), 107.

² Cited in E. J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality*, 2d ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 1.

³ Carlton J. H. Hayes, *Essays on Nationalism* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1926), 3.

⁴ Walker Connor, *Ethnonationalism: The Quest for Understanding* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 91.

⁵ Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780*, 5.

map out the conceptual terrain by first examining the problem of conceptual ambiguity, and then outlining the various theoretical perspectives of nationalism and the implications they have for our understanding of state behavior. The analytical framework to be used, based on levels of analysis, will provide a simple, yet accurate means for explaining existing theories of nationalism and nationalist conflict, and identifying important theoretical omissions, in such a way as to hopefully make the tangled web of competing arguments more approachable for IR scholars. This will help set the stage for showing how a constructivist (IR) approach to nationalism can fill in many of the gaps in our understanding of its impact on state behavior.

What is a Nation?: The Problem of Conceptual Ambiguity

If our interest is to develop a better understanding of how nationalism influences state behavior, then the ambiguity that surrounds the concept represents a serious challenge. After all, using nationalism as a variable in explaining international conflict requires a certain level of conceptual clarity. It is therefore not surprising that without it the discussion of nationalism and foreign policy has rarely moved beyond untested assertions. The reasons for this conceptual ambiguity are varied. For one thing, nationalism is a subject that is of interest to scholars in various disciplines, including historians, political scientists, sociologists, and psychologists,⁶ that do not necessarily communicate easily with each other, making it difficult to agree on a set of standard definitions. This is further complicated by “the preferred remedy [of] adopt[ing] a theoretical eclecticism that, in its attempt to do justice to the multifaceted nature of the problems involved, tends to confuse political, psychological, cultural, and demographic factors.”⁷ In addition, some scholars use the terms inconsistently, contributing to a general lack of terminological precision.⁸

However, while they may contribute to the problem, the real source of the ambiguity surrounding the concepts of nation and nationalism is not the scholars seeking to make sense of them, but the nature of

⁶ Louis L. Snyder, *The Meaning of Nationalism* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1954).

⁷ Geertz, “The Integrative Revolution,” 107.

⁸ Connor, *Ethnonationalism*, 91-2.

the concepts themselves. As many have pointed out, the nation lies in a conceptual limbo between objective reality and subjective perceptions of reality that makes easy definition all but impossible.⁹ On the one hand, it is a social group whose membership is determined by the existence of some set of shared characteristics, such as ethnicity (itself an ambiguous term), language, religion, or other aspects of culture, that distinguishes it from other groups. On the other hand, such 'objective' criteria are meaningless unless those sharing them recognize them as important. Thus, the nation can be seen as either an essentially permanent social group that "exists in nature, outside time [as] one of the 'givens' of human existence" or as a contingent one dependent on "attitude, perceptions and sentiments that are necessarily fleeting and mutable, varying with the particular situation of the subject."¹⁰

Unfortunately, neither perspective is particularly satisfying by itself. As Hobsbawm has pointed out, "objective definitions have failed, for the obvious reason that, since only some members of the large class of entities which fit such definitions can at any time be described as 'nations', exceptions can always be found."¹¹ Some entities may possess elements of shared culture, but intuitively do not seem to be nations, and vice versa. This is particularly true when one considers which criteria are necessary for nationhood. Is the presence of only one or two criteria sufficient to define a nation (e.g., language or religion), or are all needed? Might not the defining criteria differ from nation to nation? In addition, the fact that such criteria "are themselves fuzzy, shifting and ambiguous"¹² must call into question their very objectivity. For instance, how does one define French culture in an objective way that can then be used to define the French nation?

At the same time, however, defining a nation based purely on subjective grounds is equally unsatisfying. As with objective definitions, "if we define nations as groups which will themselves to persist as communities, the definition-net that we have cast into the sea will bring forth far too rich a

⁹ For discussions of this, see Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983); Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780*; and Anthony D. Smith, *National Identity* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1991).

¹⁰ Smith, *National Identity*, 20.

¹¹ Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780*, 5-6.

¹² *Ibid.*, 6.

catch.”¹³ It would apply not just to nations, but also “to many other clubs, conspiracies, gangs, teams, parties, not to mention the many numerous communities and associations of the pre-industrial age which were not recruited and defined according to the national principle and which defy it.”¹⁴ In addition, such an attempt may quickly become tautological. “To define a nation by the existence of ‘national consciousness’ or some analogous sense of solidarity between its members, merely amounts to saying that a nation is what behaves like a nation.”¹⁵ Finally, “it can lead the incautious into extremes of volunteerism which suggests that all that is needed to be or to create or recreate a nation is the will to be one.”¹⁶

Scholars have responded to the problem of whether the nation is objective or subjective in various ways. Some provide definitions only after extensive discussions aimed at justifying them. According to Eugene Kamenka, “definitions, if they are useful at all, come at the end of an inquiry and not at the beginning. In the study of history and society they provide no substitute for grasping a phenomenon in all the complexity of its historical and social development.”¹⁷ Similarly, Hobsbawm makes the case that “agnosticism is the best initial posture of a student in this field” and therefore “assumes no *a priori* definition of what constitutes a nation.”¹⁸ Ernest Gellner begins his book with a “discussion of two very makeshift, temporary definitions”¹⁹ on which he does not elaborate until later.

Others are little concerned with problems of definition at all, and indeed see attempts to nail down what a nation is as essentially counterproductive to the enterprise of understanding such a complex phenomenon. According to John Hall, “no single, universal theory of nationalism is possible. As the

¹³ Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, 53.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 53-4.

¹⁵ Eric Hobsbawm, “Some Reflections on Nationalism,” in *Imagination and Perception in the Social Sciences: Essays in Memory of Peter Nettl*, ed. T. J. Nossiter, A. H. Hanson, and Stein Rokkan (London: Faber & Faber, 1972), 386.

¹⁶ Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780*, 8.

¹⁷ Eugene Kamenka, “Political Nationalism – The Evolution of the Idea,” in *Nationalism: The Nature and Evolution of an Idea*, ed. Eugene Kamenka (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1976), 3.

¹⁸ Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780*, 8.

¹⁹ Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, 7.

historical record is diverse so too must be our concepts.”²⁰ He argues that, like economic development, nationalism has essentially “been imitative, seeking to copy something whose dimensions were broadly known.”²¹ As such, it is largely idiosyncratic, having “been affected by particular historical combinations of analytic factors, whose conjunction may not recur.”²² A similar point was made by A. W. Orridge, who argued that “it is pointless to expect more than a limited relationship between all the various kinds of nationalism or to hope that some clear-cut classification will encompass all the diverse situations in which the concept of nationality and the relationship between nationality and state have been important.”²³ David McCrone agrees, asking “on reflection, why should there be [agreement on definitions]? Like many/most concepts in social sciences, conceptual definitions and differences are theoretically rooted.”²⁴ Thus we should expect definitions of nationalism to vary with the theoretical perspective being used.

While there may be some truth to the idea that no single definition can fully encompass the complex realities that have given rise to nations around the world, such a position is at the very least problematic for (and perhaps fatal to) any prospects of advancing discussions from what a nation is to what it means for international politics. Therefore, the author will take Gellner’s approach and provide basic definitions of the terms to be used, along with further elaboration to more fully delineate their meanings. The definitions to be used are relatively common ones. However, two caveats must be noted. First, these definitions are not meant to provide closure to the debates surrounding them; it is doubtful that this is possible. Second, and perhaps most importantly, it must be recognized that no definition of these terms, no matter how clear-cut, can fully reconcile their inherent duality as concepts that possess both objective and subjective elements; this tension between the objective and the subjective is ever present in the literature on nationalism, as will become readily apparent in the coming pages.

²⁰ John A. Hall, “Nationalisms, Classified and Explained,” in *Notions of Nationalism*, ed. Sukumar Periwal (Budapest: Central European University Press, 1995), 8.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 8-9.

²² *Ibid.*, 9.

²³ A. W. Orridge, “Varieties of Nationalism,” in *The Nation-State: The Formation of Modern Politics*, ed. Leonard Tivey (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1981), 53.

²⁴ David McCrone, *The Sociology of Nationalism: Tomorrow’s Ancestors*. (London: Routledge, 1998), 3.

With these caveats in mind, this study will employ the following basic definitions. A nation will be defined as a social group whose members identify with each other on the basis of some set of ethnic, linguistic, religious, or other cultural similarities, and view this collectivity as the highest object of political loyalty. The feelings of solidarity that link the members of a nation with each other and allow them to identify themselves as belonging to a common group will be termed national identity. Nationalism is the ideology that gives political expression to this identity by holding that the nation is the highest object of political loyalty, and therefore must be defended. These definitions are of necessity somewhat general. The reason for this is, as Smith contends, “that nationalism is most fruitfully conceptualised as a single category containing subvarieties, genus and species, a diversity within a unity. That is, all nationalisms show certain basic features which mark the elements of the category, but various additional features are present in some cases, and other features in other cases, leading to a convenient grouping of cases in subtypes.”²⁵ As a result, Smith and others have attempted to develop various typologies to help deal with the diversity of the subject matter.²⁶

However, this study is less concerned with different varieties of nationalism than with different *theories* of nationalism, and the implications these theories have for our understanding of how nationalism influences state behavior. Therefore, the author will attempt to classify these theories in such a way as to explore what nationalism is in greater depth, and that makes the task of addressing existing views on nationalist conflict relatively straightforward. One approach would be to consider their perspective on the objective/subjective nature of the nation. At one end of the spectrum would be theories that treat the nation as an objective fact; at the other end would be theories that treat the nation as entirely subjective. For instance, Adeed Dawisha and David Brown have both identified three basic approaches to nationalism – primordialist, constructivist, and instrumentalist.²⁷ The first treats the nation as an

²⁵ Anthony D. Smith, *Theories of Nationalism*, 2d ed. (New York: Holmes & Meier Publishers, 1983), 193.

²⁶ For instance, see Carlton J. H. Hayes, *The Historical Evolution of Modern Nationalism* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1931); Snyder, *The Meaning of Nationalism*; and Smith, *Theories of Nationalism*.

²⁷ Adeed Dawisha, “Nation and Nationalism: Historical Antecedents to Contemporary Debates,” *International Studies Review* 4, no. 1 (Spring 2002): 3-22; David Brown, *Contemporary Nationalism: Civic, Ethnocultural and Multicultural Politics* (London: Routledge, 2000). Brown replaces the term instrumentalist with situationalist.

essentially real, objective entity rooted in human nature, while the second treats them as fundamentally subjective, socially constructed ones. The instrumentalist approach lies between the other two, treating the nation as a “purposeful construction,”²⁸ the product of manipulation by political actors in pursuit of other interests.

The classification employed in this study is similar, but is more adapted to the task of investigating the effects of nationalism on foreign policy behavior. Specifically, the author will categorize theories of nationalism based on levels of analysis (see Chapter 2). In other words, is nationalism best attributed to human nature, to the characteristics of states, or to the dynamics of the international system? This method fits well with the objective/subjective typology; primordialism and instrumentalism essentially represent first and second image approaches to nationalism, respectively, while constructivism essentially addresses the relationship between them. As such, it is an effective means for examining nationalism in more detail, providing unfamiliar readers with some background to the literature on the subject. In addition, a classification based on levels of analysis has an added advantage: since it is derived from the study of international relations, such an approach to nationalism can more clearly illustrate existing perspectives on nationalist conflict, as well as any major gaps that may exist therein.

Human Nature & the Origins of Nations: First Image Theories of Nationalism & Conflict

The first level of analysis to examine is the individual level, or what Kenneth Waltz has termed the first image. In his discussion of the causes of war, Waltz defines first image theories as those that identify “the locus of the important causes of war...in the nature and behavior of man.”²⁹ In the study of nationalism, one can similarly define first image theories as those based on the belief that it is rooted in human nature, a perspective commonly referred to as primordialism. Originally coined by Edward

²⁸ Dawisha, “Nation and Nationalism,” 6. It should be noted that the term ‘constructionist’ is also sometimes used, and should not be confused with ‘constructivist.’ For instance, see John L. Comaroff and Paul C. Stern, “New Perspectives on Nationalism and War,” in *Perspectives on Nationalism and War*, ed. John L. Comaroff and Paul C. Stern (Amsterdam: Gordon and Breach Publishers, 1995), 5.

²⁹ Kenneth N. Waltz, *Man, the State and War: A Theoretical Analysis* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959), 16.

Shils,³⁰ this has been adopted as “an ‘umbrella’ term used to describe scholars who hold that nationality is a ‘natural’ part of human beings, as natural as speech, sight or smell, and that nations have existed since time immemorial.”³¹ Primordialism thus lies at the objective end of the definitional spectrum – it represents the view that nations are real communities with deep historical roots, and whose existence can be determined through the identification of some set of more or less objective criteria, such as ethnicity, language, religion, or other aspects of shared culture. Moreover, these ties are believed to “possess a prior, overriding, and determining influence on people’s lives, one that is largely immune to ‘rational’ interest and political calculation.”³²

In its most extreme form, the primordialist perspective sees the nation as not only the product of a natural division of human beings into distinct communities, but one that is divinely inspired. For early nationalist writers, such as Johann Herder, Johann Fichte, and Giuseppe Mazzini, “God had created the nations as part of His divine plan.”³³ Such arguments have long since been discarded from serious social scientific inquiry. However, less extreme versions of primordialism have continued to inform scholarly discussions of nationalism. While generally agreeing that the nation is somehow fundamental to human nature, they differ regarding the specific source of the primordial attachments that comprise it. Such differences are not always made explicitly.³⁴ Nonetheless a number of distinct primordialist approaches may be identified. Smith and Umut Özkirimli both identify organicist (which Özkirimli labels ‘naturalist’), sociobiological, and cultural approaches,³⁵ while Virginia Tilley identifies biological, psychological, and cultural approaches.³⁶ The variations of primordialism employed in this study – ethnic, psychological, and cultural – are adapted from these typologies. The term ‘ethnic primordialism’ will be used to refer to those approaches, such as organicism and sociobiology, that are based on notions

³⁰ Edward Shils, “Primordial, Personal, Sacred and Civil Ties,” *British Journal of Sociology* 8 (June 1957): 130-45.

³¹ Umut Özkirimli, *Theories of Nationalism: A Critical Introduction* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2000), 64.

³² Anthony D. Smith, *The Nation in History: Historiographical Debates about Ethnicity and Nationalism* (Hanover: University Press of New England, 2000), 5.

³³ Boyd C. Shafer, *Nationalism: Myth and Reality* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1955), 19.

³⁴ Brown, *Contemporary Nationalism*, 8.

³⁵ Smith, *The Nation in History*, 5; Özkirimli, *Theories of Nationalism*, 66.

³⁶ Virginia Tilley, “The Terms of the Debate: Untangling Language About Ethnicity and Ethnic Movements,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 20 (July 1997): 499-500. Brown also includes the psychological approach in his discussion of primordialism; see Brown, *Contemporary Nationalism*, 7.

of common ancestry. Psychological primordialism refers to approaches that see the nation as grounded in the human tendency to form group attachments. Both of these will be discussed below. For reasons that will be made clear later, cultural primordialism will be addressed toward the end of the chapter.

Ethnic Primordialism: The Nation as Kin Group

Perhaps the most basic way of understanding primordial attachments to the nation is to view it as a community based on common ancestry.³⁷ The anthropologist, Charles Keyes, has argued

what is 'primordial' in human relations is not any particular set of cultural attributes, whatever attributes might be chosen. What is given are the facts of birth – sex, biological features, time of birth, place of birth, and descent. Each of these facts of birth have long provided humans with the basis for making distinctions among their fellow humans since those believed to share common features fixed by birth are held to be of the same 'kind.'³⁸

For Keyes, the most important of these is shared descent, which he argues “is basic...to the concept of ethnic group.”³⁹ The ethnic model of the nation as “a community of birth and native culture”⁴⁰ has often been associated with the development of nationalism, particularly in the non-Western world. Indeed, Walker holds that nationalism “in its pristine sense” can only be understood as *ethnonationalism*,⁴¹ arguing that the proliferation of alternative conceptions (e.g., religious nationalism) unnecessarily worsens the definitional problems that already exist in the literature.

Whether or not the common ancestry on which the nation is based is real in the genealogical sense is open to question. Some scholars have dismissed considerations of ancestry as an important factor for defining nations because “most national groups could be shown to be the variegated offspring of a number of peoples.”⁴² But as Connor responds, “it is not *what is*, but *what people believe is* that has behavioral consequences.”⁴³ Thus, Keyes has argued that “while...ethnicity is a form of kinship reckoning, it is one in which connections with forebears or with those with whom one believes one shares

³⁷ Brown, *Contemporary Nationalism*, 7.

³⁸ Charles F. Keyes, “Towards a New Formulation of the Concept of Ethnic Group,” *Ethnicity* 3 (September 1976): 204-05.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 205

⁴⁰ Smith, *National Identity*, 11.

⁴¹ Connor, *Ethnonationalism*, xi.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 75.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 75.

descent are not traced along precisely genealogical lines.”⁴⁴ Geertz has referred to this as ‘quasi-kinship’ “because kin units formed around known biological relationship[s]...are too small for even the most tradition-bound to regard them as having more than limited significance, and the referent is, consequently, to a notion of untraceable yet sociologically real kinship.”⁴⁵ As Smith puts it, “it is myths of common ancestry, not any fact of ancestry..., that are crucial.”⁴⁶

On the other hand, many sociobiologists have taken the position that nations do indeed represent a kind of extended family, providing a biological basis for nationalism. Sociobiology is, in essence, “the systematic study of the biological basis of all social behavior.”⁴⁷ As such, sociobiological explanations of nationalism are perhaps the most heavily grounded in the view that nations represent naturally occurring social communities. Although initially concerned with social behavior in animals, the main concepts of sociobiology have been applied to humans as well.⁴⁸ The central question that it poses is as follows: “why are animals social, that is, why do they cooperate?”⁴⁹ Sociobiologists answer this question by arguing that sociality has an evolutionary basis (i.e., it provides members with a survival advantage). At first blush this may seem counterintuitive, since individuals with a propensity for altruism might be expected to decrease their chances of passing on their genes to offspring. However, sociobiologists address this problem by extending the ways in which an individual may pass on its genes, arguing that “an animal can duplicate its genes directly through its own reproduction, or indirectly through the reproduction of relatives with which it shares specific proportions of genes.”⁵⁰ This latter process is referred to as ‘inclusive fitness.’

⁴⁴ Charles F. Keyes, “The Dialectics of Ethnic Change,” in *Ethnic Change*, ed. Charles F. Keyes (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1981), 6.

⁴⁵ Geertz, “The Integrative Revolution,” 112.

⁴⁶ Smith, *National Identity*, 22.

⁴⁷ Edward O. Wilson, *Sociobiology: The New Synthesis* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1975), 4.

⁴⁸ The latter has been referred to as ‘pop sociobiology’ by its critics due to its relative lack of rigor. See Richard H. Thompson, *Theories of Ethnicity: A Critical Appraisal* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1989), 21.

⁴⁹ Pierre L. van den Berghe, “Race and Ethnicity: A Sociobiological Perspective,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 1 (October 1978): 402.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 402.

The addition of inclusive fitness criteria has important implications for human behavior. Since individuals have a genetic interest in the propagation of not only themselves, but also their relatives, they “can be expected to behave cooperatively, and thereby enhance each other’s fitness to the extent that they are genetically related.”⁵¹ Thus, they have an evolutionary incentive to favor their own kin. According to Pierre van den Berghe, this process of kin selection may be extended beyond immediate kin groups to provide the foundation for ethnicity and race. He argues that

ethnic groups, for nearly all of human history, were what geneticists call breeding populations, in-breeding superfamilies, in fact, which not only were much more closely related to each other than to even their closest neighbors, but which, almost without exception, explicitly recognized that fact, and maintained clear territorial and social boundaries with other such ethnic groups.⁵²

While recognizing that some level of interbreeding always occurred between groups (and indeed would be necessary to maintain genetic viability), van den Berghe argues that “kinship was real often enough to become the basis of these powerful sentiments we call nationalism, tribalism, racism, and ethnocentrism.”⁵³ In other words, even when groups interacted and interbred, individuals would continue to identify with their kin group. Sociobiology therefore provides some evidence for believing that nations are based on common ancestry, and for the primordialist view that nations are real communities rooted in human nature.

This approach to nationalism has distinct advantages and disadvantages. Although not explicitly supporting the sociobiological perspective, Connor has argued that viewing the nation as a form of kinship “qualitatively distinguishes national consciousness from nonkinship identities (such as those based on religion or class) with which it has too often been grouped.”⁵⁴ This may help to avoid much of the conceptual ambiguity that surrounds nationalism by providing a more narrowly focused set of criteria for defining a nation. In addition, he argues that “an intuitive sense of kindredness or extended family would explain why nations are endowed with a very special psychological dimension – an emotional

⁵¹ Ibid., 402.

⁵² Ibid., 404.

⁵³ Ibid., 404.

⁵⁴ Connor, *Ethnonationalism*, 74.

dimension – not enjoyed by essentially functional or juridical groupings, such as socioeconomic classes or states.”⁵⁵ In essence, seeing nations as a kin group may make it easier to understand why they can invoke such strong emotional attachments.

However, while the ethnic view of primordialism may provide a good starting point, each of these purported advantages entails a distinct problem. First of all, kinship does not go far enough in narrowing the class of entities that could be considered nations. While sociobiology may provide an evolutionary basis for understanding how and why human beings form social groups, it does not indicate the specific form that such groups will take. Defining the nation based on myths of common ancestry, while not inaccurate, fails to fully differentiate it from other forms of social organization (e.g., tribes, clans, etc.) that may be based on those same myths – i.e., all nations may be based on myths of common ancestry, but not all such entities are necessarily nations. Thus, myths of common ancestry represent a necessary, but not sufficient, condition for the development of nations.⁵⁶

The same is true if one considers the mechanism by which members of a nation recognize each other as belonging to an extended kin group. Such recognition is necessary if the group is to perpetuate its existence. However, sociobiologists like van den Berghe make no attempt to argue “that we have a gene for ethnocentrism, or for recognizing kin.”⁵⁷ Instead, they recognize that the precise method by which we select kin has more to do with culture than biology. As Michael Hechter points out, “whenever individuals or groups from different social formations come into each other’s presence, they become aware of a host of differences that separate them, differences including language, demeanor, dress, music, cuisine, style of life, physiognomy, and values.”⁵⁸ Such cultural attributes, Keyes and van den Berghe agree, serve as important outward markers of common descent. Yet for them, “culture is merely a proximate explanation of why people behave ethnocentrically and nepotistically.”⁵⁹ Cultural markers

⁵⁵ Ibid., 74.

⁵⁶ James G. Kellas, *The Politics of Nationalism and Ethnicity* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1991), 11.

⁵⁷ van den Berghe, “Race and Ethnicity,” 405.

⁵⁸ Michael Hechter, “Theories of Ethnic Relations,” in *The Primordial Challenge: Ethnicity in the Contemporary World*, ed. John F. Stack, Jr. (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1986), 14.

⁵⁹ van den Berghe, “Race and Ethnicity,” 405.

merely represent surrogates for the real selection criterion of kinship. This helps explain why some nations may be based on language and others on religion; markers may differ, but the basic mechanism remains the same. As Keyes puts it, “what is common to all ethnic groups is not any particular set of cultural attributes but the idea of shared descent.”⁶⁰

Yet if cultural markers play such an important role in defining the nation, one may question the utility of pursuing sociobiological explanations. Even if culture is only a proximate explanation, it may in the end be a far more important one, since it allows for variations. As Keyes recognizes, “while ethnicity may rest on a universal predilection of humans to select positively in favor of their own kinsmen, it also is variable because of the diverse cultural meanings that people in different historical circumstances have drawn upon in interpreting and in action upon this predilection.”⁶¹ Similarly, Robin Dunbar has argued “that sociobiology only provides a framework within which explanations of particular behavioural phenomena can be made.”⁶² In the end, “the expression of the underlying ethnocentric traits will be heavily dependent on the socio-economic context.”⁶³ As such, biology remains a necessary but not sufficient condition. We will return to the issue of culture later.

The necessity for recognizing the emotional sentiments that are attached to nationalism introduces a second major problem for the sociobiological approach, namely that the psychological element it introduces may in fact overshadow kinship relations in importance. Regardless of any kernel of truth that may be behind it, the fact that the *myth* of common ancestry is more important to the foundation of the nation than any genealogical reality demonstrates the key role of perception in defining the nation. As Smith points out,

primordial attachments rest on perception, cognition, and belief. It is individual members who assume that these cultural features are givens, who attribute overwhelming importance to these ties, who feel an overpowering sense of coerciveness, and so on. They possess a power beyond rational calculation and interest – because people attribute

⁶⁰ Keyes, “Towards a New Formulation of the Concept of Ethnic Group,” 206.

⁶¹ Keyes, “The Dialectics of Ethnic Change,” 6.

⁶² Robin I. M. Dunbar, “Sociobiological Explanations and the Evolution of Ethnocentrism,” in *The Sociobiology of Ethnocentrism: Evolutionary Dimensions of Xenophobia, Discrimination, Racism and Nationalism*, ed. Vernon Reynolds, Vincent Falger, and Ian Vine (London: Croom Helm Ltd., 1987), 48.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 57.

that power and meaning to them, not because of the nature of the primordial ties in itself.⁶⁴

Connor makes the same point when he states that “tangible characteristics such as religion and language are significant to the nation only to the degree to which they contribute to this notion or sense of the group’s self-identity and uniqueness.”⁶⁵ In fact, he argues, “a nation can lose or alter any or all of its outward characteristics without losing its sense of vital uniqueness which makes it a nation.”⁶⁶ Thus, while nations may indeed be based on perceived kinship relations, it is these perceptions, not the kinship itself, that is important for understanding nationalism. In that case, nationalism becomes a matter of psychology, not biology.

Psychological Primordialism: The Nation as In-Group

The importance of perception and emotional feelings of group loyalty in defining the nation has led some scholars to address its psychological underpinnings. In fact, despite his focus on the importance of kinship, Connor argues that “the essence of the nation is a *psychological* bond that joins a people and differentiates it, in the subconscious conviction of its members, from all nonmembers in a most vital way.”⁶⁷ According to him, this point is too often overlooked due to the fact that the “tangible elements” of the nation are often more easily identified and studied, and because they are so often linked to nationalist struggles by nationalists themselves.⁶⁸ As such, the psychological approach to nationalism has often been ignored.⁶⁹ Yet as Snyder points out, “psychological analysis is not only possible but necessary in dealing with the meaning of nationalism.”⁷⁰

Psychological explanations of nationalism are based on the recognition that human beings seem to display a natural tendency to develop group attachments. As Hayes once put it, “man is a social animal, not so much in that he is indiscriminately social with all men as in that he is peculiarly social with

⁶⁴ Smith, *The Nation in History*, 21.

⁶⁵ Connor, *Ethnonationalism*, 104.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 104.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 197; emphasis added.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 104-05.

⁶⁹ Stephen Reicher and Nick Hopkins, *Self and Nation: Categorization, Contestation and Mobilization* (London: SAGE Publications, 2001), 1.

⁷⁰ Snyder, *The Meaning of Nationalism*, 12.

particular groups of men. He seems always to have been drawn naturally to some special group and to have displayed a marked loyalty to it.”⁷¹ These group attachments help the individual to satisfy “economic, sociocultural, and political needs, giving individuals a sense of security, a feeling of belonging, and prestige.”⁷² Although for some of these needs (e.g., physical security) the role of the group may be purely instrumental, requiring little in the way of psychological explanation, others are more deeply rooted in the human psyche.

Yet some would argue that even security has a psychological dimension. “Need for safety encompasses bodily safety, absence of physical threat, and *psychological security*, which rests or – more exactly – is derived from the ‘predictable world’ encompassing the understanding of what will happen around us and how people will behave toward us.”⁷³ This need for predictability is based on a human being’s limited cognitive capacity. As Martha and Richard Cottam remind us, “cognitive psychologists have argued that people must impose organization on the social environment in order to manage its complexities.”⁷⁴ One way in which this is done is by categorizing. “At its simplest level, categorization involves the placing of a particular object, or entity, within a general category.”⁷⁵ This allows the individual to simplify his or her environment in order to make decision-making easier. Without such simplification, the decision-making process would be too complex and time consuming.⁷⁶

The process of categorization has important implications for our understanding of nationalism. As Dusan Kecmanovic points out, “one of the key properties of social categories is that they simultaneously include and exclude: they at once indicate what one is and what one is not.”⁷⁷ Thus, by categorizing individuals on the basis of relevant similarities and differences (e.g., cultural markers), in-

⁷¹ Hayes, *The Historical Evolution of Modern Nationalism*, 1.

⁷² Daniel Druckman, “Nationalism, Patriotism, and Group Loyalty: A Social Psychological Perspective,” *Mershon International Studies Review* 38 (April 1994): 44.

⁷³ Dusan Kecmanovic, *The Mass Psychology of Ethnonationalism* (New York: Plenum Press, 1996), 4; emphasis added.

⁷⁴ Martha L. Cottam and Richard W. Cottam, *Nationalism and Politics: The Political Behavior of Nation States* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2001), 88.

⁷⁵ Michael Billig, *Arguing and Thinking: A Rhetorical Approach to Social Psychology*, New Edition. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 151.

⁷⁶ It should be noted that the importance of categorization has been questioned by Billig; see Billig, *Arguing and Thinking*.

⁷⁷ Kecmanovic, *The Mass Psychology of Ethnonationalism*, 28.

groups and out-groups are established. Experiments have demonstrated “that the mere classification of people into groups evokes biases in favor of one’s own group. Just by being told that one belongs to a particular group as opposed to another – even if one has never seen or met any other members of that group – is enough to make the individual prefer the group over others.”⁷⁸ This holds true even when categorization involves ‘minimal groups’ that are “purely perceptual or cognitive,”⁷⁹ and when neither competition nor conflict is present.⁸⁰ These experiments have also shown that in-group bias results in a preference for relative over absolute gains.⁸¹

A number of theories have been developed to explain these results. Social identity theory focuses on the way in which group membership enhances an individual’s self-esteem. “It assumes that people are motivated to evaluate themselves positively and that in so far as they define themselves in terms of some group membership they will be motivated to evaluate that group positively.”⁸² In fact, how they define themselves relative to the group may be far more important to enhancing their self-esteem than how they define themselves in terms of their personal identity – “the idiosyncratic characteristics which distinguish us from other individuals.”⁸³ Kecmanovic explains this as follows:

To improve the latter, [individuals] must improve their own performances, bringing them into a more desirable state. There is, however, another, more comfortable and easier way to achieve the same goal. Individuals can overvalue the qualities, virtues, skills, and so on of their own group members, and through such a ‘mental trick’ enhance their positive self-image.⁸⁴

As a result, “nationalism links individuals’ self-esteem to the esteem in which the nation is held. Loyalty and identification with the nation become tied to one’s own sense of self.”⁸⁵

In contrast to social identity theory’s focus on the role of group membership in enhancing self-esteem, self-categorization theory “places greater emphasis on the nature of the categorization process

⁷⁸ Druckman, “Nationalism, Patriotism, and Group Loyalty,” 48.

⁷⁹ John C. Turner, et al., *Rediscovering the Social Group: A Self-Categorization Theory* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1987), 27.

⁸⁰ Druckman, “Nationalism, Patriotism, and Group Loyalty,” 48.

⁸¹ Kecmanovic, *The Mass Psychology of Ethnonationalism*, 29.

⁸² Turner, et al, *Rediscovering the Social Group*, 29-30.

⁸³ Reicher and Hopkins, *Self and Nation*, 33.

⁸⁴ Kecmanovic, *The Mass Psychology of Ethnonationalism*, 38.

⁸⁵ Druckman, “Nationalism, Patriotism, and Group Loyalty,” 48-9.

that occurs when people identify with groups.”⁸⁶ In essence, this is a reemphasis “on the cognitive aspects of social identification.”⁸⁷ Categorization involves the identification of a prototype “that corresponds to what the group has in common *and* to what differentiates it from another group.”⁸⁸ This prototype serves as an ideal reference point for the members of the group. As a result, “self-categories provide the values, norms and understandings that guide what members do and don’t do.”⁸⁹

Whatever the specific explanation, the natural tendency for human beings to form and identify with groups provides evidence for a psychological basis for nationalism. However, such psychological explanations possess problems similar to those of sociobiology. First, they remain too general. While psychology may help to explain why human beings form groups, it says little about what kind of groups will be formed or why the nation should be a more salient group than others. Self-categorization theory, in particular, recognizes that individuals may belong to several groups whose importance to the individual’s identity will vary depending on circumstances. One may identify oneself as a member of several groups – citizens of the United States, residents of the state of Maryland, fans of the Pittsburgh Steelers – but such group identification does not automatically denote a nation. Thus, as with sociobiology, human psychology may be a necessary condition for nationalism, but it is not sufficient to explain why the nation (as opposed to one’s favorite football team) is so often the ultimate object of loyalty.

Harold Isaacs attempted to explain this by arguing that the nation represents a ‘basic group identity,’ one that is more fundamental than other groups (e.g., class, educational, occupational) because it “consists of the readymade set of endowments and identifications that every individual shares with others from the moment of birth by the chance of the family into which he is born at that given time in that given

⁸⁶ Ibid., 49.

⁸⁷ Reicher and Hopkins, *Self and Nation*, 37.

⁸⁸ Eddy van Avermaet, “Social Influence in Small Groups,” in *Introduction to Social Psychology: A European Perspective*, 2d ed., ed. Miles Hewstone, Wolfgang Stroebe, and Geoffrey M. Stephenson (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Inc., 1996), 517.

⁸⁹ Reicher and Hopkins, *Self and Nation*, 38.

place.”⁹⁰ In that respect it bares similarities with the sociobiological approach; loyalty to the nation is a matter of kinship. However, instead of basing his argument on biology, Isaacs focused on socialization. From birth, an individual is socialized to see itself as a member of a particular group. He puts it as follows:

The baby acquires a *name*, an individual name, a family name, a group name, a first symbol for the new child in the *language* through which he will discover his world. He is already a product of the *history and origins*, of which by being born to this family in this place at this time, he becomes heir. He automatically acquires the *religion* of his family and his group and he becomes at once an acknowledged holder of the *nationality* or other condition of national, regional, or tribal affiliation his people hold.⁹¹

Thus, national identity holds a special place for most individuals because they have been socialized to it from birth.

However, this introduces a second problem, namely that it begins to call into question the primordialism of national feelings. As Kecmanovic points out, “national feeling is not given by birth (by nature) but is rather sociopsychologically conditioned; that is, it develops in the course of the individual’s existence.”⁹² If that is the case, then it is a serious mistake to assume that nationalism is an inherent part of human nature. Those who study the psychological roots of nationalism are themselves quick to recognize the limits of such an approach. While providing an important necessary condition, a full understanding of nationalism requires one to go beyond psychology. Reicher and Hopkins summarize this point as follows:

Social identity theory will be profoundly misunderstood and misrepresented if one forgets the key proviso: differentiation occurs on *valued dimensions of comparison*. What is valued depends upon the specific category that one is dealing with. It is a function of cultural and not psychological factors....Therefore, in order to understand how groups behave towards each other one cannot be content with looking at psychological processes in the abstract. Rather, one must look at how general processes manifest themselves within the specific context of concern.⁹³

⁹⁰ Harold R. Isaacs, *Idols of the Tribe: Group Identity and Political Change* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1975), 38.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 39.

⁹² Kecmanovic, *The Mass Psychology of Ethnonationalism*, 1.

⁹³ Reicher and Hopkins, *Self and Nation*, 33-4.

This is particularly important given the fact that the particular manifestations of group identity may change over time. As Isaacs points out, “basic group identity is not as fixed and crusted as it can come to seem when one discusses it in shorthand ways. On the contrary, it is remarkably dynamic, in an almost constant state of becoming.”⁹⁴ Thus, the nation is not a static unit of social organization that can be taken for granted. While the natural tendency to form groups may be rooted in psychology, or biology, the specific nature of group membership and loyalty depends on the circumstances in which it develops. We will return to this point later.

The First Image of Nationalist Conflict: Primordialism & Its Implications for State Behavior

The primordialist perspective described above has important implications for our understanding of how nationalism influences state behavior, particularly the propensity for interstate conflict. From the standpoint of ethnic primordialism, ethnic or nationalist conflicts are often attributed to ‘ancient hatreds.’ However, the question is why the division of humans into different kin groups would necessarily produce conflict between them. After all, the favoring of one’s own kin does not necessarily require hostility towards others. As Vernon Reynolds points out, “relations between more distant groups would be characterized by indifference or perhaps even lack of goodwill, but they could still be neutral.”⁹⁵ Reynolds addresses this problem by introducing the element of resource competition. According to him, the potential for hostility arises when “resource availability [becomes] a crucial determinant of the survival prospects of individuals and groups.”⁹⁶ Throughout history, human beings have been forced to compete for scarce resources, often aggressively, in order to ensure the survival of their own kin group. As a result, ethnic attachments have acquired a sense of individual and group survival.

This is the basic argument made by R. Paul Shaw and Yuwa Wong, who take a distinctly evolutionary approach to understanding warfare. They argue that humans and their propensity for warfare have evolved together over time in response to changes in their environment. Over millions of

⁹⁴ Isaacs, *Idols of the Tribe*, 205.

⁹⁵ Vernon Reynolds, “Sociobiology and the Idea of Primordial Discrimination,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 3 (July 1980): 306.

⁹⁶ Reynolds, “Sociobiology and the Idea of Primordial Discrimination,” 307.

years humans “have evolved the capacity to respond aggressively to threats...[which] become operative when prompted by appropriate stimuli and environment.”⁹⁷ Specifically, the demands of competition for scarce resources would have forced early humans to form close-knit kin groups for purposes of mutual defense and survival, and would have sometimes required these groups to engage in conflict to do so. Of course, Shaw and Wong are quick to point out that this does not imply that humans are “genetically determined or inherently driven to fight.”⁹⁸ However, they do maintain that such evolutionary foundations represent the ultimate cause – i.e., “the underlying reason for an activity existing in an animal’s repertoire of behavior”⁹⁹ – of warfare.

Although such approaches to understanding warfare are not uncommon,¹⁰⁰ Shaw and Wong specifically apply it to the problem of nationalist conflict. They argue that early groups of humans would have needed to band together in ever-larger groups in order to ensure their security and survival. According to them, “it is by this process that out-group enmity and ethnocentrism have been reinforced and carried over from nucleus ethnic group to band, to tribe, to chiefdom, to nation-state.”¹⁰¹ This helps to provide the necessary link between the sociobiological responses of individuals and small groups (i.e., concerns of inclusive fitness), and the behaviors of nations. In essence, “the inclusive fitness logic of nationalism bonds individual concerns for family and kin with those of the nation. Inclusive fitness and kin selection dictate the family unit as the center of love and solidarity throughout evolution. Now,...the nation is similarly conceived.”¹⁰² Thus, while in-group biases arising from concerns for inclusive fitness might be more commonly applied to small groups, “nationalism has effectively mobilized these same

⁹⁷ R. Paul Shaw and Yuwa Wong, *Genetic Seeds of Warfare: Evolution, Nationalism, and Patriotism* (Boston: Unwin Hyman, Inc., 1989), 6.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 6.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 11.

¹⁰⁰ For basic summaries of these approaches, see Seyom Brown, *The Causes and Prevention of War*, 2d ed. (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1994); and Greg Cashman, *What Causes War?: An Introduction to Theories of International Conflict* (New York: Lexington Books, 1993). For more specific discussions of the sociobiological basis of warfare, see *Sociobiology and Conflict: Evolutionary Perspectives on Competition, Cooperation, Violence and Warfare*, ed. J. van der Dennen and V. Falger (London: Chapman and Hall, 1990).

¹⁰¹ Shaw and Wong, *Genetic Seeds of Warfare*, 45.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 143.

biases to operate at the level of the nation.”¹⁰³ Since such biases are seen as a potential cause of conflict between groups, Shaw and Wong conclude that “nationalism has emerged as a powerful vestige of humanity’s propensity for war.”¹⁰⁴

From the standpoint of psychological primordialism, the potential for nationalist conflict arises primarily from in-group/out-group biases, regardless of whether such biases are grounded in any form of shared kinship. As mentioned earlier, association with an in-group provides an important source of individual identity and self-esteem. Ronald Glossup argues that “people want their own nation-state to have a high status; they feel good when their country has the highest gross national product or...the largest number of nuclear warheads. People feel bad when their country falls behind others in these and other categories.”¹⁰⁵ As a result, Cottam and Cottam argue that strong identification with an in-group will make such a group “more vigilant regarding and sensitive to insults, frustrations, and aggressive action by out-groups.”¹⁰⁶ Similarly, Kecmanovic argues that “the frustration of so-called primary or vital instincts” can raise man’s innate aggressive potential.¹⁰⁷ Among these vital instincts he includes the desire “to retain one’s frame of reference because it, directly and/or indirectly, supplies one’s sense of identity.”¹⁰⁸ Thus, perceived slights from an out-group may be interpreted as a threat to one’s identity, potentially resulting in a violent reaction.

The State & the Development of Nations: Second Image Theories of Nationalism & Conflict

In contrast to the first image focus on human nature, second image explanations of interstate conflict are based on the belief that “the internal organization of states is the key to understanding war and peace.”¹⁰⁹ Similarly, second image theories of nationalism see the nation, not as an inherent part of

¹⁰³ Ibid., 143.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 138.

¹⁰⁵ Ronald J. Glossup, *Confronting War: An Examination of Humanity’s Most Pressing Problem*, 3d ed. (Jefferson: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 1994), 79.

¹⁰⁶ Cottam and Cottam, *Nationalism and Politics*, 93.

¹⁰⁷ Kecmanovic, *The Mass Psychology of Ethnonationalism*, 143.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 143.

¹⁰⁹ Waltz, *Man, the State and War*, 81.

human existence, but as contingent on specific social and political conditions. In broad terms, this relates to the fact that most scholars maintain that nationalism is the product of a specific stage of history – i.e., it is a uniquely modern phenomenon. Specifically, nations and nationalism are generally seen as the result of various changes associated with the rise of the modern state. In narrower terms, some scholars support the idea that they are the product of, and are continually subject to, the conscious manipulation of domestic political elites. Whether the changes that produced the nation are seen as the result of natural social processes or purposeful political action, second image theories of nationalism derive their explanations from the internal characteristics of states. Each of these sets of arguments will be addressed in turn.

Nationalism & Modernity: The Nation as Product of Historical Change

The fact that nations are a uniquely modern phenomenon may not be readily apparent. After all, it is certainly possible to identify social groups throughout history that have defined themselves as distinct entities on the basis of some cultural affinity or sense of kinship. Yet most scholars today do not recognize such groups as representing full-fledged nations.¹¹⁰ As Orridge observed, “ancient Greeks and Germans were aware that they were different from other peoples, but their political units were cities and tribes, often in bitter conflict with one another, and only external threat produced even temporary unity.”¹¹¹ Instead, Hobsbawm refers to such entities as proto-nations,¹¹² while Smith uses the term ethnic cores or *ethnies*.¹¹³ While they might provide the necessary foundations on which future nations could be built, they generally remained far too heterogeneous to qualify as nations themselves. This is not to say that modern nations are so homogeneous that they have eliminated all competing group identities; such is obviously not the case. Indeed, when such identities become too strong, they may override or even replace broader national identities and lead to the breakdown of the nation in question. However, when one contrasts the group identity of the modern nation with that associated with pre-modern societies, it

¹¹⁰ For a notable exception, see John A. Armstrong, *Nations Before Nationalism* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1982).

¹¹¹ Orridge, “Varieties of Nationalism,” 39.

¹¹² Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780*.

¹¹³ Smith, *National Identity*.

becomes clear that the development of nations represents a significant change in the scale of group loyalties.

Both Gellner and Smith argue that pre-modern societies were highly fragmented into various horizontal (or lateral, in Smith's terminology) and vertical cleavages. For Gellner, both types of cleavages existed in all pre-modern, agrarian societies, while Smith sees each as representing a distinct type of *ethnie*. Whether they are seen as common to all societies or specific to only some, horizontal cleavages represent differences in occupational specializations, such as aristocrats, warriors, clerics, and administrators, within the upper classes. They were lateral in the sense that they were "at once socially confined to the upper strata while being geographically spread out to form often close links with the upper echelons of neighbouring lateral *ethnies*."¹¹⁴ While each of these groups shared a privileged position within society, they retained distinct group identities. Gellner points out that "both for the ruling stratum as a whole, and for the various sub-strata within it, there is a great stress on cultural differentiation rather than on homogeneity."¹¹⁵ At the same time, Smith makes the point that any sense of ethnic solidarity among a given society's upper classes "was bound up with its *esprit de corps* as a high status stratum and ruling class."¹¹⁶ Ethnic identity was thus largely subsumed by class identity.

For the lower classes, vertical fragmentation within a potential ethnic group occurred largely due to the fact that "small peasant communities generally live inward-turned lives, tied to the locality by economic need if not by political prescription. Even if the population of a given area starts from the same linguistic base...a kind of culture drift soon engenders dialectical and other differences."¹¹⁷ Because such differentiation among the lower classes was an effective tool for keeping them under control, the ruling elites made no attempt to reduce vertical fragmentation. Smith makes a similar point, arguing that even ancient societies with a strong sense of ethnic identity generally "failed to inculcate a public culture in the middle and lower classes and made little attempt to unify the population either through a single

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 53.

¹¹⁵ Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, 10.

¹¹⁶ Smith, *National Identity*, 53.

¹¹⁷ Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, 10.

occupation system throughout the territory or by prescribing common rights and duties for all members of the kingdom.”¹¹⁸ Under such conditions, the modern nation could not exist.

What made the transformation of *ethnies* into nations possible, according to Gellner and Smith,¹¹⁹ was the set of fundamental economic, cultural, and institutional changes in social organization that began to occur in the modern period. Economically, the Industrial Revolution helped to break down traditional social barriers in the name of greater efficiency. The innovation needed to fuel economic growth required a new dynamism in which the division of labor could constantly change – i.e., it required social mobility. Traditional social roles thus became too rigid. As Gellner puts it, “a society which is destined to a permanent game of musical chairs cannot erect deep barriers of rank, of caste or estate, between the various sets of chairs which it possesses. That would hamper the mobility, and...lead to intolerable tensions.”¹²⁰ The advent of industrial society thus produced the first incentives to break down the barriers between traditional group identities, making the development of a broader national identity possible.

This forced important cultural changes as well. Namely, industrialization required the development of a standardized educational system. In order for individuals to be able to take advantage of the new opportunities provided by increased social mobility, their education had to be broad enough to give them the potential to shift between various types of jobs. Gellner argues that this could not be achieved in a highly fractured, localized society.

The level of literacy and technical competence, in a standardized medium, a common conceptual currency, which is required of members of this society if they are to be properly employable and enjoy full and effective moral citizenship, is so high that it simply *cannot* be provided by the kin or local units, such as they are. It can only be provided by something resembling a modern ‘national’ educational system, a pyramid at whose base are primary schools, staffed by teachers trained at secondary schools, staffed by university-trained teachers, led by the products of advanced graduate schools.¹²¹

¹¹⁸ Smith, *National Identity*, 46.

¹¹⁹ Since Gellner addresses these same factors, and considers societies to possess both types of cleavages, the argument being made here is generalized. It should be noted, however, that Smith makes this argument specifically with respect to lateral *ethnies*. His discussion of the transformation of vertical *ethnies* will be addressed in the next section.

¹²⁰ Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, 25.

¹²¹ Ibid., 34.

Similarly, Karl Deutsch emphasized the importance of communication as a prerequisite for the nation, arguing that “membership in a people...consists in the ability to communicate more effectively, and over a wider range of subjects, with members of one large group than with outsiders.”¹²² A system of national education would help to facilitate this ability. Likewise, Benedict Anderson attributes the rise of nationalism in Europe to the growth of print media in vernacular languages.¹²³ Thus, the growth and standardization of institutions of secular education, at least partially due to the necessities of industrialization, helped to produce a more homogenous society by providing its members with a common set of skills and the means by which they could better communicate with each other (e.g., a national language).

Both of these developments were made possible by a third set of institutional changes – the development of the modern state. The modern, bureaucratic state sought to centralize its administrative control over society to a far greater extent than ever before – “its agents increasingly reaching down to the humblest inhabitant of the least of its villages,”¹²⁴ in Hobsbawm’s words. “The extension of citizenship rights and the build-up of an infrastructure that linked distant parts of the realm and vastly increased the density of communication networks within the state borders drew more and more areas and classes into the national political arena and created the images of national community, of ‘England’, ‘France’, ‘Spain’, that evoke such powerful feelings of commitment and belongings to this day.”¹²⁵ Thus, the development of the modern state helped to produce a more homogeneous society by making its members more interconnected and socializing them “as ‘nationals’ and ‘citizens’.”¹²⁶ Without this process, nations could not develop. As Smith points out, “the state was the necessary condition and matrix for the gestation of the national loyalties so evident today.”¹²⁷

¹²² Karl W. Deutsch, *Nationalism and Social Communication: An Inquiry Into the Foundations of Nationality*, 2d ed. (Cambridge: The M.I.T. Press, 1966), 97.

¹²³ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, rev. ed. (London: Verso, 1991).

¹²⁴ Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780*, 80.

¹²⁵ Smith, *National Identity*, 59-60.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 16.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 59.

To this trio of revolutionary changes one may add the changing nature of warfare as well. A number of scholars have attributed the development of nationalism, and of the state itself, to the transformation in warfare that began to occur around the 16th century.¹²⁸ Michael Mann has argued that “under the pressure of the Military Revolution..., reinforced by persistent eighteenth-century wars, [the state’s] military activities began to significantly affect social life....From being fairly insignificant, states now loomed over the lives of their subjects, taxing and conscripting them, attempting to mobilize their enthusiasm for its goals.”¹²⁹ This last point is particularly important for the development of nationalism. As Hobsbawm points out, with the rise of modern warfare, “state interests now depended on the participation of the ordinary citizen to an extent not previously envisaged. Whether the armies were composed of conscripts or volunteers, the willingness of men to serve was now an essential variable in government calculations.”¹³⁰ This willingness was greatly enhanced by the innovation of nationalism.

It is for the reasons described above that the nation is so often associated with the modern state, so much so that the terms have come to be used interchangeably in everyday speech and political discourse, and sometimes even by political scientists themselves.¹³¹ In those instances when state and nation do not coincide, as is often the case, nationalism often manifests itself as a call for one’s own state (e.g., nationalist movements among Palestinians, Kurds, Tamils, Basques, etc.). In fact, John Breuilly explicitly uses the term “to refer to political movements seeking or exercising state power and justifying such action with nationalist arguments.”¹³² It is this intimate connection with the modern state, which itself represents a relatively recent innovation (see Chapter 2), that has led to the recognition among most

¹²⁸ For discussions of the ‘military revolution,’ see Geoffrey Parker, *The Military Revolution: Military Innovation and the Rise of the West, 1500-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988) and Jeremy Black, *A Military Revolution?: Military Change and European Society 1550-1800* (Atlantic Highlands: Humanities Press International, Inc., 1991). For a discussion of the impact of the military revolution on the rise of the state, see Bruce D. Porter, *War and the Rise of the State: The Military Foundations of Modern Politics* (New York: The Free Press, 1994).

¹²⁹ Michael Mann, “A Political Theory of Nationalism and Its Excesses,” in *Notions of Nationalism*, ed. Sukumar Periwal (Budapest: Central European University Press, 1995), 47-8.

¹³⁰ Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780*, 83.

¹³¹ Note the tendency among many political scientists, including the author, to use the term ‘international relations’ instead of the more proper ‘interstate relations.’

¹³² John Breuilly, *Nationalism and the State*, 2d ed. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1993), 2.

scholars of nationalism that nations are an inherently modern phenomenon rooted not in human nature, but in the political and economic development of states.

It should therefore not be surprising that, with few exceptions, most scholars agree that the development of nations began in Western Europe, the birthplace of the modern state.¹³³ According to William Pfaff, the nation was “a political consequence of the literary-intellectual movement called Romanticism, a Central European reaction to the universalizing, and therefore disorienting, ideas of the eighteenth-century French Enlightenment.”¹³⁴ Smith argues that “the formation of nations in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries has been profoundly influenced by the examples of England, France and Spain, and to a lesser extent Holland and Sweden,”¹³⁵ which provided the blueprint for others to follow. For Greenfeld, England provided the prototype of all other nations.¹³⁶ Regardless of the specific country of origin, “the ‘nation’ proved an invention on which it was impossible to secure a patent. It became available for pirating by widely different, and sometimes unexpected, hands.”¹³⁷ As the modern state spread throughout Europe, and eventually throughout the world through colonization, so too did the nation as a new form of collective identity. From this point of view, nationalism developed out of a natural process of political adaptation arising out of changing circumstances. While human nature, both biologically and psychologically, provided the necessary predisposition for forming distinct group identities, changing political circumstances produced their substantive form as nations.

The Politics of Nationalism: The Nation as Interest Group

While some scholars focus on the historical processes that gave rise to nations, others focus on the active role that political actors take in responding to and shaping those processes. This is essentially the instrumentalist or situationalist approach to nationalism, which sees it as a rational response by self-interested groups to the processes of modernization discussed above. In essence, national identity is

¹³³ One notable exception is Anderson, who argues that concepts of nation developed first in the Americas. See Anderson, *Imagined Communities*.

¹³⁴ William Pfaff, *The Wrath of Nations: Civilization and the Furies of Nationalism* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1993), 14.

¹³⁵ Smith, *National Identity*, 59.

¹³⁶ Liah Greenfeld, *Nationalism: Five Roads to Modernity* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992).

¹³⁷ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 67.

important “because [it] appear[s] to offer particular utility to individual and group interests in the context of contemporary situational opportunities and threats.”¹³⁸ The idea that the passions generally associated with nationalism are in fact rational would seem counterintuitive. However, Russell Hardin points out that competition between ethnic groups may yield benefits to the winner that provide individuals with a material incentive to strongly associate themselves with the group.¹³⁹ In addition, Brown cites the possibility that the cultural markers on which nationalism is based are readily identifiable and therefore may allow group members to be more easily mobilized for political action. Also, “ethnic and national claims...have an important advantage over other attachments which cannot so easily portray themselves as natural, in that they can more easily clothe the interests being defended in the language of natural rights, and thereby provide particularly effective ways to strengthen a bargaining position.”¹⁴⁰ Nationalism is thus the product not just of the historical changes associated with the rise of the state, but of domestic political processes within the state.

Of course, one could argue that if nationalism is rational because it provides certain benefits to group members, then it might also encounter a serious free-rider problem. If these benefits accrue to group members solely because they possess the proper ‘objective’ characteristics needed for membership, then individuals might have little incentive to become personally involved (i.e., to become strongly attached to the group); they might obtain the benefits of membership without active participation. Hardin addresses this problem by treating it as a coordination game in which “all that is needed to achieve successful mobilization is relevant communication to coordinate on doing what we would all want to do if only we were sure others were also doing it.”¹⁴¹ In the context of nationalism, this means that while individuals may have an interest in identifying with a particular national group, doing so requires coordination in order to determine the specific basis (e.g., language, religion) on which to establish it. In some cases, such coordination may be more or less random. However, Hardin also points out that

¹³⁸ Brown, *Contemporary Nationalism*, 15.

¹³⁹ Russell Hardin, “Self-Interest, Group Identity,” in *Perspectives on Nationalism and War*, ed. John L. Comaroff and Paul C. Stern (Amsterdam: Gordon and Breach Publishers, 1995).

¹⁴⁰ Brown, *Contemporary Nationalism*, 15.

¹⁴¹ Hardin, “Self-Interest, Group Identity,” 20.

“whether we coordinate might turn in part on whether there is someone urging us to recognize our identity and coordinate on it.”¹⁴²

This introduces the critical role played by elites in shaping and mobilizing national identity in pursuit of their interests. According to Paul Brass, the cultural markers that allow groups to distinguish themselves from others, and which are viewed by primordialists as essentially natural, are actually products of a process of politicization on the part of elites. This process “involves the selection of particular dialects or religious practices or styles of dress or historical symbols from a variety of available alternatives.”¹⁴³ These cultural markers become politicized such that they “acquire increasingly subjective and symbolic significance, are translated into consciousness of, and a desire for, group solidarity, and become the basis for successful political demands.”¹⁴⁴ As such, the cultural markers themselves do not possess any inherent meaning. In fact, Gellner points out that “nationalism uses the pre-existing, historically inherited proliferation of cultures or cultural wealth, though it uses them very selectively, and it most often transforms them radically.”¹⁴⁵ While relatively objective differences between groups may exist, in many cases the cultural ‘traditions’ that are used to mark the uniqueness of the nation are almost entirely invented.¹⁴⁶

This is true even of the most ‘objective’ symbols of differentiation, such as language and religion. In the case of language for instance, Hobsbawm argues that it is far less of an objective determinant of group membership than generally regarded. For him, “the question is whether such linguistic barriers are believed to separate entities which can be regarded as political nationalities or nations, and not merely groups which happen to have trouble in understanding each other’s words.”¹⁴⁷ In other words, differences in language might not carry with them any political significance. Furthermore, Hobsbawm points out that in highly fragmented societies, a language might actually involve various local and regional dialects that

¹⁴² Ibid., 21.

¹⁴³ Paul R. Brass, *Ethnicity and Nationalism: Theory and Comparison* (London: Sage Publications Ltd., 1991), 25.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 22.

¹⁴⁵ Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, 55.

¹⁴⁶ For a discussion of this, see Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (eds.), *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

¹⁴⁷ Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780*, 51.

would have often made communication between potential co-nationals extremely difficult. As a result, Hobsbawm concluded that

national languages are...almost always semi-artificial constructs and occasionally, like modern Hebrew, virtually invented. They are the opposite of what nationalist mythology supposes them to be, namely the primordial foundations of national culture and the matrices of the national mind. They are usually attempts to devise a standardized idiom out of a multiplicity of actually spoken idioms, which are thereafter downgraded to dialects, the main problem in their construction being usually, which dialect to choose as the base of the standardized and homogenized language.¹⁴⁸

Thus, far from being an objective marker of nationality, a national language is generally the product of political choices made by elites in their drive to create a common group identity.

Perhaps most importantly, the selection of appropriate symbols is not a value-free process. On the contrary, it is an inherently political act, as “the choice of the leading symbol of differentiation depends upon the interests of the elite group that takes up the ethnic cause.”¹⁴⁹ Since situational changes may affect group interests, the emphasis given to specific symbols may change over time, undermining the view that such symbols represent objective social facts. Perhaps more importantly, they may be contested by competing groups of elites with conflicting interests. In this case, “the cultural forms, values, and practices of ethnic groups become political resources for elites in competition for political power and economic advantage.”¹⁵⁰ Nationalism becomes a tool for attacking opponents and/or mobilizing public support for state policies.

In addition to defining the boundaries of the nation through the identification of appropriate symbols, elites must mobilize the members of the nation to pursue the nation’s interests (at least as they are defined by the elites). According to Breuilly, mobilization “make[s] it possible for politicians to establish contact with large numbers of people or...create the expectation and capacity on the part of large numbers of people to insist on some sort of political representation.”¹⁵¹ It is this integration of the public that Smith sees as crucial in the evolution of vertical *ethnies* into nations. He argues that “the main task

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 54.

¹⁴⁹ Brass, *Ethnicity and Nationalism*, 30.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 15.

¹⁵¹ Breuilly, *Nationalism and the State*, 19-20.

of an ethnic intelligentsia [was] to mobilize a formerly passive community into forming a nation around the new vernacular historical culture that it has rediscovered.”¹⁵² As Breuilly points out, “even if nationalist movements do not have active popular support they claim to speak for the whole nation. In this sense nationalist politics is always mass politics.”¹⁵³

However, while the development of a nation may depend on the efforts of its elites to mobilize and speak for its population, this introduces another important factor in nationalism as a political phenomenon – the role of the public as an independent force. Ernst Haas argues that “nation and nationalism imply a situation in which popular awareness of, and some degree of popular participation in, politics prevail.”¹⁵⁴ Similarly, Hobsbawm maintains that “whatever else a nation was, the element of citizenship and mass participation or choice was never absent from it.”¹⁵⁵ As such, nationalism has often been intimately linked with democracy. According to Craig Calhoun, “nationalism grew partly out of popular challenges to the authority and legitimacy of those at the top of modern states. A crucial thread in the development of nationalism was the idea – and eventually the taken-for-granted, gut-level conviction – that political power could only be legitimate when it reflected the will, or at least served the interests, of the people subject to it.”¹⁵⁶ As Greenfeld succinctly put it, “originally, nationalism developed *as* democracy.”¹⁵⁷

From the instrumentalist perspective, nationalism is thus highly variable and dependent on the particular circumstances of a given situation. This implies that nationalism might be a temporary phenomenon; indeed, numerous scholars have suggested just that. As John Comaroff and Paul Stern have pointed out, “it has become commonplace to note that the most surprising thing about nationalism... is the fact that it is still with us at all.”¹⁵⁸ At the very least, even if nationalism is unlikely to fade away entirely,

¹⁵² Smith, *National Identity*, 64.

¹⁵³ Breuilly, *Nationalism and the State*, 19.

¹⁵⁴ Ernst B. Haas, *The Rise and Decline of Nationalism*, vol. 1 of *Nationalism, Liberalism, and Progress* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997), 22-3.

¹⁵⁵ Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780*, 19.

¹⁵⁶ Craig Calhoun, *Nationalism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), 69.

¹⁵⁷ Greenfeld, *Nationalism*, 10.

¹⁵⁸ Comaroff and Stern, “New Perspectives on Nationalism and War,” 2.

its variability would indicate that the specific form it takes and the intensity with which it is expressed is not constant. As such, one should be able to determine the conditions necessary to invoke strong nationalist reactions, and what their behavioral consequences might be.

The Second Image of Nationalist Conflict: Political Nationalism & Its Implications for State Behavior

The broader question of what the nation's modernity means for nationalist conflict will be discussed in detail in the next chapter. This leaves nationalism's overtly political nature to be addressed here. The view that nationalism is a product of domestic political processes is quite common, and yields a very different picture of the causes of nationalist conflict than the primordialist views discussed earlier. From this perspective, the prospects for nationalist conflict are dependent on the domestic political conditions of the state in question. For instance, Stephan Van Evera identifies four characteristics of nationalist movements that affect their likelihood of causing war, each of which relates to the issue of nation/state congruence. First, nationalist movements that have not yet attained statehood are more likely to engage in conflict, since "their accommodation requires greater and more disruptive change."¹⁵⁹ Once statehood is attained, conflict propensity will depend on the movement's attitude toward any diaspora that may exist (i.e., what is the likelihood that significant irredentist or reintegrationist pressures will persist?). In addition, even if no diaspora exists, the likelihood of nationalist conflict will increase if the movement does not respect the same rights of self-determination for others (e.g., Nazi Germany). Finally, conflict propensity will be influenced by the degree of respect accorded to national minorities (i.e., is there a potential for new separatist claims to arise in the future?). To these Van Evera adds a number of other domestic factors, including demographics, the internal balance of power between groups, past and current conduct of national groups, regime legitimacy, and economic and political stability.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁹ Stephen Van Evera, "Hypotheses on Nationalism and War," in *Nationalism and Ethnic Conflict*, ed. Michael E. Brown, et al (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1997), 31.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., 33-47. It should be noted that many of these factors are most applicable to intrastate ethnic conflict.

Thus, one second image explanation of nationalist conflict is that it arises from disputes regarding who has political authority over particular peoples and territories.¹⁶¹ Yet this raises the important question of what would happen if these disputes could be settled. Would nationalism no longer be a source of international conflict? For some scholars the answer is definitely ‘no’. Hayes asserted “that nationalism does not exhaust its functions and resources when it unites a dismembered nationality and erects a national state;...almost invariably nationalism is *heightened* rather than lessened by the attainment of national sovereignty and that a national state, so soon as it is solidly established, proceeds to evolve a ‘national policy,’ which is as bellicose as it is nationalist.”¹⁶² The reason for this continued militarism, according to Hayes, is that “every national state has a class of professional militarists, who constantly play upon the nationalist emotions of their fellow citizens, particularly upon national fear and dread of the foreigner, and who perennially emphasise the competitive nature of national militarism.”¹⁶³ This provides another, and particularly common, second image explanation of nationalist conflict – that it is the product of elite manipulation.

According to Erica Downs and Phillip Saunders, such arguments generally take one of three forms. The first is that elites use nationalism “to divert attention from the state’s inability to meet societal demands for security, economic development, and effective political institutions.”¹⁶⁴ A second is that interest groups with expansionist or militarist aims use nationalism to gain political support for their own parochial interests. Finally, “political elites can incite nationalism to gain an advantage in domestic political competition.”¹⁶⁵ The common element in each of these arguments is the view that nationalism is not a genuine expression of loyalty to the nation, but instead is somehow artificially manufactured by

¹⁶¹ This is what the author would refer to as ethnic conflict.

¹⁶² Hayes, *Essays on Nationalism*, 157; emphasis added.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, 193-94.

¹⁶⁴ Erica Strecker Downs and Phillip C. Saunders, “Legitimacy and the Limits of Nationalism: China and the Diaoyu Islands,” *International Security* 23, no. 3 (Winter 1998/99): 114.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 114.

political elites in pursuit of their own, presumably *non-nationalist*, interests.¹⁶⁶ In other words, nationalism becomes a justification for the pursuit of policies that were decided on for other reasons. Similarly, in their review of a number of books on ethnic conflict, James Fearon and David Laitin point out that “if there is a dominant or most common narrative in the texts under review, it is that large-scale ethnic violence is provoked by elites seeking to gain, maintain, or increase their hold on political power.”¹⁶⁷

If this were indeed the case, there might be little point to exploring the connection between nationalism and international conflict. After all, such an analysis would yield few insights if nationalism simply serves to obscure some other factor(s) affecting the conflict propensity of states. The ability of elites to use nationalism to mobilize public support might be a worthy topic of study, but in explaining conflict one could be content to focus on the ‘real’ interests of decision-makers. Yet the very question of why publics could be so easily duped by their leaders should give us pause before accepting this explanation at face value. If nationalism can be used to manipulate publics to follow particular policies, then some ‘real’ nationalist sentiments must exist in at least some portion of the population for such nationalist appeals to work. After all, how can one exhort people to action on behalf of the nation if that term carries no meaning for them? Consequently, if elites are indeed tapping into something ‘real’ when they invoke nationalism, it would seem logical to conclude that such sentiments may be ‘real’ for them as well. This is not to say that nationalism is never used as a political tool. Indeed, the issue of political manipulation may be important in many, perhaps most, cases. However, to reduce nationalist conflict to domestic politics risks ignoring the fact that, while nationalism may be a relatively modern invention, it may still have a powerful impact on human behavior.

¹⁶⁶ This should be considered distinct from the idea presented earlier that nations and nationalism are ‘invented.’ One refers to a set of ideas that, while invented, is accepted by a society’s elites and serves to shape their perceptions of the world, while the other does not.

¹⁶⁷ James D. Fearon and David D. Laitin, “Violence and the Social Construction of Ethnic Identity,” *International Organization* 54 (Autumn 2000): 846.

Moving Beyond ‘What is a Nation?’: The Constructivist Approach to Nationalism

The debate between primordialism and instrumentalism is a long-standing one in the literature on nationalism. Couching it in the context of levels of analysis provides a useful way of presenting the debate in terms familiar to scholars of international relations. However, it also has the added benefit of allowing the author to shed new light on the theoretical problems inherent in these perspectives, problems that lead back to the value of using IR theory in general, and constructivism in particular, to better understand nationalism and nationalist conflict. In fact, the contours of the primordialist-instrumentalist debate bear important resemblances to the debates in IR theory discussed in the previous chapter, leaving open the possibility that a similar solution may be employed – namely, a constructivist approach to nationalism that can bring together its objective and subjective elements. Toward that end, it is necessary to examine the advantages and disadvantages of both perspectives, particularly the central theoretical problem of reductionism that plagues both, and what potential solution can be developed.

Agent-Structure Redux: The Problem of Reductionism in Nationalist Theory

Let us start with primordialism. There is a certain temptation in viewing nations as some form of permanent or semi-permanent social arrangement based upon a set of objective characteristics whose roots lie somewhere in the depths of human antiquity, if for no other reason than that it fits our preconceptions about the organization of human communities. Most people have come to accept the primordial nation as a given. Indeed, one has only to look at the tendency to view ethnic conflicts as the result of ‘ancient hatreds’ to recognize the persistence of primordialist attitudes, at least in much of the public and popular media. More importantly, primordialism helps to account for the persistence of particular national identities over time.¹⁶⁸ While it would certainly be a stretch to argue that all nations have ancient historical roots, one can identify regularities in patterns of identification whose persistence might call into question the instrumentalist view that such identities are subject to changing calculations of interest.

¹⁶⁸ George M. Scott, Jr., “A Resynthesis of the Primordial and Circumstantial Approaches to Ethnic Group Solidarity: Towards an Explanatory Model,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 13 (April 1990): 149.

However, critics of the primordialist perspective would argue that such temptations should be resisted, since it possesses a number of problems that make its usefulness for understanding nationalism questionable. One criticism, according to John Stack, is that “the very term [primordialism] suggests a romanticization of individual and collective behavior not appropriate for social science.”¹⁶⁹ This is at least in part due to its association with the writings of nationalists themselves, who often use similar language to defend the unalterable character of their nation. Although both the sociobiological and psychological variants discussed earlier represent attempts to bring greater scientific scrutiny to the subject, it may be difficult to escape a sense of national destiny when one considers the nation as the inevitable product of human nature. Similarly, primordialism comes “dangerously close to crude statements of cultural determinism.”¹⁷⁰ Not only does this make it difficult to consider possible alternative outcomes, but it may also result in stereotypes “in which continents, countries, or ethnic groups have been ranked from civilized or superior to uncivilized or barbaric.”¹⁷¹ The term primordialism often carries with it a negative connotation. As such, Cottam and Cottam argue that “treating nationalism as something primordial, barbaric, or evil is both value-laden and contrary to the advancement of social science.”¹⁷²

Such problems are more or less specific to the issue of nationalism. Yet the primordialist perspective is further weakened by a broader theoretical problem similar to one discussed in the last chapter – namely, reductionism. As noted in Chapter 2, Waltz argued against reductionist attempts to explain international politics (i.e., focusing on the attributes of states), since they fail to take into account the external constraints on state behavior. He illustrates this with the following example:

To try to [predict outcomes from attributes] amounts to overlooking the difference between these two statements: ‘He is a troublemaker.’ ‘He makes trouble.’ The second statement does not follow from the first one if the attributes of actors do not uniquely

¹⁶⁹ John F. Stack, Jr., “The Ethnic Challenge to International Relations Theory,” in *Wars in the Midst of Peace: The International Politics of Ethnic Conflict*, ed. David Carment and Patrick James (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1997), 16.

¹⁷⁰ John F. Stack, Jr., “Ethnic Mobilization in World Politics: The Primordial Perspective,” in *The Primordial Challenge: Ethnicity in the Contemporary World*, ed. John F. Stack, Jr. (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1986), 2.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 2.

¹⁷² Cottam & Cottam, *Nationalism and Politics*, 12.

determine outcomes. Just as peacemakers may fail to make peace, so troublemakers may fail to make trouble.¹⁷³

The same may be said for primordialist explanations of nationalism. The statement ‘He behaves as a Chinese’ does not necessarily follow from the statement ‘He is a Chinese.’ The latter refers to the fact that he possesses the attributes (language, religion, ancestral ties, etc.) of a Chinese; the former refers to the fact that his behavior is consistent with someone who identifies with the Chinese nation. Explaining his behavior solely on the basis of his membership within a particular nation is reductionist, since it ignores the possibility that circumstances may affect the expression of identity (e.g., an American-born Chinese). It is therefore insufficient to explain the phenomenon of nationalism.

In essence, to base our understanding of nationalism on human nature is to ignore the external conditions that inevitably influence how that nature is expressed. As James Kellas has stated, “human nature provides the ‘necessary’ condition for ethnocentric behaviour, but politics converts this into the ‘sufficient conditions’ for nationalism as we understand it today.”¹⁷⁴ This point was summarized quite succinctly by Waltz in his early criticism of first image theories of war.

Wars would not exist were human nature not what it is, but neither would Sunday schools and brothels, philanthropic organizations and criminal gangs. Since everything is related to human nature, to explain anything one must consider more than human nature. The events to be explained are so many and so varied that human nature cannot possibly be the single determinant.¹⁷⁵

As with first image theories of war, “the primordial approach [to nationalism] explains everything and nothing.”¹⁷⁶ Thus, while primordialism may provide important insights into the nature of nationalism, it is necessary to go beyond it by examining the political conditions that allow nationalism to manifest itself.

¹⁷³ Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (New York: McGraw-Hill, Inc., 1979), 60-1

¹⁷⁴ Kellas, *The Politics of Ethnicity and Nationalism*, 19

¹⁷⁵ Waltz, *Man, the State and War*, 80-1.

¹⁷⁶ Stack, “Ethnic Mobilization in World Politics,” 2.

Like the systemic approach to international politics advocated by Waltz and others, the instrumentalist approach to nationalism seeks to explore the structural conditions that produce it.¹⁷⁷ It is important to note that in this context, structure refers to the *domestic* structure – e.g., domestic political institutions, internal balances of power, etc. – that constrains the behavior of domestic political actors (e.g., elites and publics). For some scholars of nationalism, the second image view that nations and nationalism are the products of a process of modernization associated with the rise of the modern state and, in particular, that they are the products of a rational political process of national formation and mobilization, is an appealing one. Such “structural analyses of behavior” provide far more “rigor, explanatory power, and predictive value” than primordialist explanations.¹⁷⁸ In particular, they may help to account for fluctuations in the existence and/or intensity of national identities over time and under different conditions.¹⁷⁹

However, while instrumentalism may be more analytical, its tendency to view nationalism as essentially rational introduces other issues. As Brown points out, it may be problematic “to provide a rational-choice explanation for political affiliations which are not perceived as rational choices by those involved, which are emotionally powerful, and which clearly sometimes impel people to acts of irrational prejudice and hatred.”¹⁸⁰ Indeed, instrumentalism’s explanation for ethnic or nationalist conflict would seem particularly problematic. As Hayes once noted, “the ordinary normal man will not lay down his life for his own economic gain, and surely not for the financial profit of some anonymous fellow citizen who has foreign investments; the supreme sacrifice is paid only for an ideal.”¹⁸¹ Yet instrumentalism generally defines interests in largely material terms. While disputes over the distribution of material benefits may be a contributing factor, at least in some cases, Donald Horowitz points out that “disputes over seemingly

¹⁷⁷ For references to instrumentalism as structural, see Scott, “A Resynthesis of the Primordial and Circumstantial Approaches to Ethnic Group Solidarity,” 148; and Lui Hebron and John F. Stack, Jr., “World Politics and the Internationalization of Ethnicity: The Challenges of Primordial and Structural Perspectives,” in *The Ethnic Entanglement: Conflict and Intervention in World Politics*, ed. John F. Stack, Jr. and Lui Hebron (Westport: Praeger Publishers, 1999).

¹⁷⁸ Stack, “Ethnic Mobilization in World Politics,” 2.

¹⁷⁹ Scott, “A Resynthesis of the Primordial and Circumstantial Approaches to Ethnic Group Solidarity,” 149.

¹⁸⁰ Brown, *Contemporary Nationalism*, 15.

¹⁸¹ Hayes, *Essays on Nationalism*, 128.

symbolic issues, such as recognition of one or another language as the official language or one design or another in a national flag, are, if anything, more severe.”¹⁸² Thus, instrumentalism “stretch[es] credulity by supposing that visions of slightly better jobs motivated the indescribably cruel conflicts, replete with ritual maimings and slaughter of the innocent, between Tamils and Sinhalese, Sikhs and Hindus, Armenians and Azerbaijanis, Serbs and Croats.”¹⁸³ By largely eschewing less tangible factors, such as ideology and prestige, in spurring ethnic/nationalist conflict,¹⁸⁴ it “fails to explain why ethnic conflicts are so often intense and unpredictable, why the ‘masses’ should so readily respond to the call of ethnic origin and culture, and why so many people may be ready to lay down their lives for their tribal nations.”¹⁸⁵

Thus, one could argue that while it may correctly seek to identify the structural conditions that make nationalism possible, instrumentalism is flawed by its over-reliance on an essentially material view of that structure (i.e., the political and economic conditions of society) and how it affects the behavior of rational, self-interested domestic actors. As such, it is hard-pressed to account for the less tangible issues of emotion, symbolism, and ideology – or, in a word, ideas. Such criticism should ring a bell with the reader, since this is precisely the constructivist critique of neorealism discussed in the last chapter. In his early discussion of the agent-structure problem in IR theory, Alexander Wendt pointed out that, while Waltz and other neorealists reject *explanatory* reductionism (i.e., explaining state behavior by way of state properties), they fall victim to *ontological* reductionism. According to Wendt, “an opposition to agent-level explanations is analytically independent of how system structure, once recognized as causally significant, should be theorized.”¹⁸⁶ Although Waltz correctly recognized the importance of system structure in any understanding of international politics, he incorrectly *defined* that structure in a reductionist way – as reducible to the distribution of state capabilities. Thus, the state is made

¹⁸² Donald L. Horowitz, “Ethnic and Nationalist Conflict,” in *World Security: Challenges for a New Century*, 2d ed., ed. Michael T. Klare and Daniel C. Thomas (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1994), 177.

¹⁸³ Ronald Rogowski, “Comparative Politics,” in *Political Science: The State of the Discipline II*, ed. Ada W. Finifter (Washington: The American Political Science Association, 1993), 441.

¹⁸⁴ Hebrun and Stack, “World Politics and the Internationalization of Ethnicity,” 43.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 42.

¹⁸⁶ Alexander E. Wendt, “The Agent-Structure Problem in International Relations Theory,” *International Organization* 41 (Summer 1987): 341.

‘ontologically primitive’ – its existence and properties are assumed without any theory of the state to inform those assumptions. As a result, it cannot account for the ways in which the state’s identity and interests are themselves constituted by the system, nor can it deal with the role that ideas play in that process.

Much the same can be said about instrumentalism. A structural approach to nationalism could certainly prove beneficial by elaborating on the circumstances that produce it. Yet it matters *how* that structure is defined. To define it, as instrumentalists generally do, solely in terms of a set of material constraints requires one to make assumptions about the interests of domestic actors that may be unwarranted. Just as neorealism has no theory of the state, instrumentalism has no theory of the nationalist. It seeks to explain nationalism as a rational response by self-interested domestic actors to structural changes in society without attempting to explain why these actors have the interests they do or how they came to be nationalists in the first place. In other words, it ignores the fact that the identities and interests of domestic actors may be constituted by the structure of the social system in which they are embedded – i.e., by a set of collectively held ideas.

This is essentially what Greenfeld argues. In terms reminiscent of Waltz, she regards nationalism as “an ‘emergent phenomenon,’ that is, a phenomenon whose nature...is determined not by the character of its elements, but by a certain organizing principle which makes these elements into a unity and imparts to them a special significance.”¹⁸⁷ However, for her the organizing principle behind the phenomenon of nationalism is not material, but the *idea* of the nation; “the only foundation of nationalism as such, the only condition, that is, without which no nationalism is possible, is an idea; nationalism is a particular perspective or a style of thought.”¹⁸⁸ Specifically, the idea of the nation is the concept that ‘the people’ are “the bearer of sovereignty, the basis of political solidarity, and the supreme object of loyalty.”¹⁸⁹ What constituted ‘a people’ (e.g., language, religion, ethnicity) might be determined, often quite arbitrarily, by those elites that believed a nation existed or should exist, and sought to give that nation

¹⁸⁷ Greenfeld, *Nationalism*, 7.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 3-4.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 7.

political expression. However, without this set of ideas (i.e., without nationalism), there could be no nations, since the cultural similarities on which they are based would have no meaning. As Gellner puts it, “it is nationalism which engenders nations, and not the other way round.”¹⁹⁰ Thus, while primordialism may be guilty of the same reductionist errors that Waltz attributes to unit-level theories of international politics, instrumentalism shares with him his own error of ontological reductionism. As in IR theory, this leads one to consider a constructivist approach to nationalism.

Reconciling the Primordial-Instrumental Debate: The Nation as Social Construct

The application of constructivism to the problem of nationalism is certainly not new. Although the term is used inconsistently (or sometimes not at all), many scholars of nationalism have made essentially constructivist arguments. In fact, constructivist concepts can be found even in the work of a ‘primordialist’ like Geertz. He supported the idea that the primordial attachments on which the nation is based, what he referred to as “the assumed ‘givens’...of social existence,”¹⁹¹ are primarily cultural, a position that is often referred to as cultural primordialism. Along with kinship, these attachments include “the givenness that stems from being born into a particular religious community, speaking a particular language, and following particular social practices.”¹⁹² Thus, national identity depends on more than just kinship; it “derives from a cultural interpretation of descent.”¹⁹³ However, he states elsewhere that “believing...that man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun, I take culture to be those webs, and the analysis of it to be therefore not an experimental science in search of law but an interpretive one in search of meaning.”¹⁹⁴ Cultural attributes like language and religion are not primordial in the sense of something derived from human nature, but are only treated as if they were by those that possess them (and all too often by the scholars who study them). This brings the primordialism of his position into question.

¹⁹⁰ Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, 55.

¹⁹¹ Geertz, “The Integrative Revolution,” 109.

¹⁹² Ibid., 109.

¹⁹³ Keyes, *Ethnic Change*, 5.

¹⁹⁴ Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., Publishers, 1973), 5.

As Tilley correctly points out, Geertz's perspective is more constructivist than it is primordialist, since he "specifies the social (not 'natural') character of such 'givens'."¹⁹⁵ Ethnic attachments *appear* primordial because they are based on "certain assumptions or knowledge systems...[that] form a kind of cognitive substratum not only for affect but for most conscious thought."¹⁹⁶ In other words, they are based on ideas, making them in some sense artificial, but ideas that are so taken for granted that they become the virtually unquestioned foundations on which other beliefs are built. Thus, she argues that Geertz's "use of the term 'primordialism' [is] more in its sense of 'first in a series' ..., in order to highlight the ways in which foundation concepts provide the basis for other ideas, values, customs or ideologies held by the individual."¹⁹⁷ To associate this with the idea that nations are grounded in human nature (the usual meaning of primordial) is to misinterpret Geertz's argument.

Taken this way, Tilley suggests that it is a mistake to discount the importance of 'primordial' attachments.¹⁹⁸ Ethnic differences may not be primordial in the sense that they are objectively real and firmly grounded in human nature, but they may be associated with "actual institutional incompatibility" – e.g., a clash of value systems – that could provide a deeper source of group conflict than conscious manipulation by political elites.¹⁹⁹ In essence, real differences between ethnic groups do exist that may have important political consequences, and therefore cannot be ignored. However, for Tilley, the differences that matter are not the 'objective' characteristics usually identified by primordialists, but the more fundamental differences in ideas and values that give them meaning.²⁰⁰ She thus supports a less stringent form of primordialism.

At the same time, however, Tilley does not entirely discount instrumentalism. Since they are not truly natural, ethnic attachments are subject to change. New ideas and beliefs may arise as individuals adapt to changing circumstances. Although such ideas may be actively promoted by elites with perceived

¹⁹⁵ Tilley, "The Terms of the Debate," 501.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid., 503.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid., 502.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid., 508.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid., 508.

²⁰⁰ Ibid., 509.

interests in them, this does not necessarily prevent them from becoming accepted to the extent that their artificial origins no longer matter. As Tilley points out, “ethnic rhetoric can generate new ideas, values and customs which ‘primordialize’ – enter the realm of collectively held unexamined assumptions – in the long run.”²⁰¹ Thus, as a number of scholars have argued, the debate between primordialism and instrumentalism is both artificial and unnecessary.²⁰² Each simply represents a different side of the same coin – different aspects of a process whereby accepted group identities are continuously reproduced, or altered to form a new set of accepted identities, by the actions of the group’s members.

Thus, as Tilley points out, “any constructivist approach [to nationalism] would...argue for understanding ethnic identity as an *idea* or *discourse* rather than as an empirically observable social ‘unit.’”²⁰³ The same is true for Rogers Brubaker, who warns against relying on a “realist ontology of nations” that sees them “as real entities, as communities, as substantial collectivities.”²⁰⁴ Instead, Brubaker argues that nations exist as “categories of practice.”²⁰⁵ In essence, this means that, while the nation may be a political fiction based on the ideas of some set of political elites, it is one that “becomes momentarily yet powerfully realized in practice.”²⁰⁶ In other words, the nation may not be ‘real’ in the primordialist sense, but so long as the *idea* of the nation continues to influence a society’s perceptions and behavior (i.e., its members continue to act *as if* it were real) the nation may be treated as such. However, once a society ceases to act on the basis of their nationhood (i.e., the idea of a nation no longer carries any meaning for its members), the nation ceases to exist. Therefore, like any other social structure, the existence or nonexistence of a nation is only realized through social practice.

From this perspective, Brubaker concludes that the emphasis on the nature of nationalism (i.e., what is nationalism?) has been ill-founded. He argues that “we should not ask ‘what is a nation’ but

²⁰¹ Ibid., 511.

²⁰² Ibid., 511; Scott, “A Resynthesis of the Primordial and Circumstantial Approaches to Ethnic Group Solidarity,” 149; and Comaroff and Stern, “New Perspectives on Nationalism and War,” 5.

²⁰³ Tilley, “The Terms of the Debate,” 511.

²⁰⁴ Rogers Brubaker, *Nationalism Reframed: Nationhood and the National Question in the New Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 14, 13.

²⁰⁵ Ibid., 15.

²⁰⁶ Ibid., 16.

rather: how is nationhood as a political and cultural form institutionalized within and among states?”²⁰⁷

Similarly, Tilley argues that “ethnic identities should be analyzed not by examining the purported ethnic ‘unit’ as a stable social entity, but by examining the conditions in which the idea of the ethnic identity developed, how the identity has changed character through history, and the social purposes it serves.”²⁰⁸

Thus, if the nation is not a ‘real’ community, but can only be understood as an outcome of social practice based on a set of shared ideas, then it is necessary to focus attention on the dynamics of practice that produce it and not treat the nation as a static quality.

Scholars of nationalism have begun to recognize the need for such a constructivist approach. However, this still leaves open the question of how such an approach should be applied to the problem of nationalist conflict. As Fearon and Laitin point out, “no literature articulating theoretical or empirical connections between the social construction of ethnicity and violence yet exists....Instead,...we find constructivist ‘moves’ mixed sporadically with modes of analysis that do not seem particularly constructivist.”²⁰⁹ It is therefore necessary to break new theoretical ground by developing a more explicitly constructivist framework for understanding how the social construction of nationalism affects state behavior. This will be done in the next chapter. However, before moving on to develop a constructivist theory of nationalism and conflict, it is first necessary to address a key issue that is often missing from discussions of nationalism.

What’s Missing?: The Necessity of a Third Image

The constructivist approach to nationalism discussed above helps to alleviate the problem of reductionism, but only from the standpoint of *domestic* politics. If one is concerned with the impact of nationalism on the foreign policy behavior of states, as the author is, then this would still be reductionist, since nationalism as presented so far is primarily the product of internal processes of social construction. However, such processes tell only part of the story. As Brubaker alludes to when he asks how the nation

²⁰⁷ Ibid., 16.

²⁰⁸ Tilley, “The Terms of the Debate,” 511-12.

²⁰⁹ James D. Fearon and David D. Laitin, “Violence and the Social Construction of Ethnic Identity,” *International Organization* 54 (Autumn 2000): 847.

is institutionalized within and *among* states,²¹⁰ the shared ideas and social practices that define the nation are as much a product of *international* politics as domestic politics, perhaps more so. Thus, what is largely missing from existing theories of nationalism, whether constructivist or not, is a third image that takes into account the role of the international system.

There are a number of reasons why nationalism should be seen as at least partly the product of international-level processes. First, as already discussed, the nation is fundamentally linked with the state. Since the state may be seen as constituted by the international system (see Chapter 2), it would make sense to consider the nation as similarly constituted. For instance, Prizel makes the point that, “while a polity must meet a set of preconditions to form a nation [i.e., it must possess some ethnic or cultural characteristics on which a nation may be based], it is interaction with the outside world, namely the acceptance or rejection of ‘the other,’ that allows polities to develop a sense of national uniqueness.”²¹¹ This interaction may take the form of “a short and cataclysmic event,”²¹² such as a war, or may involve continuous interaction over many generations. Yet whatever its specific form the idea of the nation only arises out of the interaction between political actors. Thus, while the development of nationalism may involve some domestic political processes (e.g., cultural homogenization), it is the process of international interaction that makes such a development possible. In essence, it is the existence of a system of sovereign states that opens the door to the possibility of nations.

Second, in most cases the origins of the national idea are not entirely domestic. As previously mentioned, the idea of the nation originated in certain parts of Western Europe and then spread elsewhere as other states sought to copy it. In many cases, this process of adaptation was a direct reaction to external threats. Just as states might seek to copy a new technology from more successful competitors, they might also seek to copy ideas and institutional patterns such as nationalism. As such, it is not enough to simply consider the domestic-level processes of cultural and political change that go along with the development of nationalism; it is essential to examine its international origins as well.

²¹⁰ Brubaker is primarily concerned with domestic processes.

²¹¹ Prizel, *National Identity and Foreign Policy*, 16.

²¹² *Ibid.*, 17.

Of course, a third image approach to nationalism would not necessarily have to be constructivist in nature. Kellas suggests that “international relations and the structure of international society have an impact on nationalism, and they often determine its success or failure and the form which it takes.”²¹³ What he implies here is that international conditions may affect the ability of nationalist movements to pursue their goals. Mark Suzman makes this point more explicitly, stating that “on one level international events, relations with other states or movements, and broader geopolitical shifts can all have direct repercussions on both the shape of nationalist strategies and their success or failure. On another, achieving independent statehood, the ultimate political objective of nationalism, necessarily implies securing international recognition as well as domestic sovereignty.”²¹⁴ In both cases, international politics is recognized as having an important effect on nationalism.

The same could be said for the effect of the international system on nationalist conflict. While “neorealism has historically played a key role in [the] disengagement of IR theory from the ‘national’ and in reproducing realism as an exclusively statecentric discourse,”²¹⁵ some realists have made attempts to address the question of nationalism and conflict from the perspective of the international system. Such analyses have largely focused on the role that anarchy plays in creating the conditions for nationalist conflict.²¹⁶ For instance, John Mearsheimer has argued that the “hyper-nationalism [of the pre-1945 era] was caused in large part by security competition among the European states, which compelled European elites to mobilize publics to support national defense efforts.”²¹⁷ After the Cold War, many scholars worried that the same security competition that supposedly led to the nationalism-fuelled wars of the 19th and 20th centuries could once again become a source of nationalist conflict. As Van Evera notes, one reason for pessimism cited by some scholars was “that Europe’s virulent ethnic hatreds and latent border

²¹³ James G. Kellas, *The Politics of Nationalism and Ethnicity* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1991), 146.

²¹⁴ Mark Suzman, *Ethnic Nationalism and State Power: The Rise of Irish Nationalism, Afrikaner Nationalism and Zionism* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1999), 133.

²¹⁵ Yosef Lapid and Friedrich Kratochwil, “Revisiting the ‘National’: Toward an Identity Agenda in Neorealism?,” in *The Return of Culture and Identity in IR Theory*, ed. Yosef Lapid and Friedrich Kratochwil. (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1996), 106.

²¹⁶ Jack Snyder, “New Nationalism: Realist Interpretations and Beyond,” in *The Domestic Bases of Grand Strategy*, ed. Richard Rosecrance and Arthur A. Stein. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), 179.

²¹⁷ John J. Mearsheimer, “Back to the Future: Instability in Europe After the Cold War,” *International Security* 15, no. 1 (Summer 1990): 12.

conflicts [would] re-emerge, like plagues from Pandora's box, if the superpowers lift[ed] the lid by withdrawing."²¹⁸ Without the bipolarity that kept nationalist tensions in check, states and ethnic groups in Europe (and presumably other regions) would once again be subject to a security dilemma that could lead to war.

In the opinion of the author, such analyses represent a step in the right direction. As Yosef Lapid and Friedrich Kratochwil suggest, "this readiness to reconsider formerly dismissive attitudes toward national phenomena contributes to an end of the strange silence in IR theory and, at the same time, opens up new opportunities for a revitalized realist research program."²¹⁹ However, a strictly realist approach to nationalism remains problematic. Lapid and Kratochwil argue that it "reduces [nationalism] to a 'second order' variable, an epiphenomenon of the interstate system and its anarchical structure...merely a reflection of more 'basic' forces – such as the security dilemma and power balancing among the preexisting 'like units'."²²⁰ As such, it employs an overly simplistic understanding of nationalism that (not surprisingly) fails to take into account the fundamental issues of identity that are at the heart of the concept. To correct this problem, it is necessary to develop a constructivist approach to nationalism and conflict that addresses the system-level dimension of the national idea.

²¹⁸ Stephen Van Evera, "Primed for Peace: Europe after the Cold War," *International Security* 15, no. 3 (Winter 1990-1991): 9.

²¹⁹ Lapid and Kratochwil, "Revisiting the 'National'," 106.

²²⁰ *Ibid.*, 112.

Chapter 4. COMPLETING THE THEORETICAL BRIDGE: TOWARD A CONSTRUCTIVIST THEORY OF NATIONALIST CONFLICT

The last chapter drew two important conclusions regarding the nature of nationalism. First, the nation is not a ‘real’ community, but an ‘imagined’ one (to borrow Benedict Anderson’s term) – the product of an idea of nationhood (i.e., nationalism) shared among its members and made real through social practice. Second, the shared ideas and social practices that define the nation are as much a product of international politics as domestic politics. Because existing approaches to understanding nationalist conflict do not fully take these issues into account, they are, at best, incomplete. It is therefore necessary to rethink the effects of nationalism on state behavior. Given its focus on structures of shared knowledge, the constructivist approach in IR theory (see Chapter 2) provides an excellent tool for doing so. Thus, the final step in bridging IR theory and nationalism is to employ constructivism to develop a third image theory of nationalism and nationalist conflict. In essence, the key to understanding nationalist conflict is to understand precisely how nationalist ideas and practices are constituted by the international system, and what this means for the interests and actions of states.

In doing so, it is important to recall Alexander Wendt’s division of social structure into micro and macro dimensions. The former is concerned with interactions between states, while the latter represents a deeper structure operating at the level of the population of states. As discussed in Chapter 2, these different structural dimensions involve different levels of shared knowledge, and thus different forms of identity. Nationalism’s impact on state behavior therefore depends on the specific form of identity that the nation represents. It will be argued in this chapter that nationalism can be seen as both a macro- and micro-structural phenomenon, each having different implications for understanding nationalist conflict. Specifically, while seeing the nation as a *type* of state may provide important insights into the interests that might make nationalist states more prone to conflict in certain circumstances, it will be argued that

the potentially aggressive influence of nationalism on foreign policy posited by many scholars is best seen as a manifestation of a role conflict that develops through state interaction. As such, whether or not nationalism results in more aggressive foreign policy behavior depends primarily on the nature of the social interaction between the specific states involved, *not* on any inherent quality of nationalism itself.

Nation as ‘Type’: The Macro-Structural Impact of Nationalism on State Behavior

Since the macro-structural dimension of nationalism provides the necessary foundation for understanding its place in the international system, let us start with it. It is not difficult to see that what James Mayall refers to as the ‘national idea’ – “that the world is (or should be) divided into nations and that the nation is the only proper basis for a sovereign state and the ultimate source of government authority”¹ – has become an integral part of the world’s body of shared knowledge. According to Mayall, this idea has successfully challenged “the assumptions, practices and institutions of the traditional world,”² and as a result has made international society what it is today. “The ultimate measure of that success,” he argues, “is the difficulty that people have everywhere..., in envisaging an alternative political form to that of the nation-state. In the modern world the relations of governments, as much as those of peoples, are invariably described as *international* relations; to describe them in any other way would be pedantic. Except to a handful of scholars, nationalism is not a problem; rather national sentiment is so pervasive and self-evident that it has become invisible.”³ Indeed, it is precisely this invisibility that has contributed to the ‘neglect-of-nationalism’ problem mentioned in Chapter 1.

At the same time, however, it is important to recognize that nationalism’s reordering of international society has not been without its limitations. As Mayall puts it, “the nationalists... were more often forced to accommodate their own plans to the existing structure, than they were able to rebuild the international system in their own image.”⁴ The pursuit of national self-determination had to be grafted onto the existing system of sovereign states. As such, the rise of nationalism does not so much

¹ James Mayall, *Nationalism and International Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 2.

² Ibid., 25.

³ Ibid., 25.

⁴ Ibid., 26.

represent the wholesale replacement of the sovereign state as a transformation in its nature, with self-determination taking its place alongside sovereignty as the dual (though not always equal) principles of international legitimacy. Thus, we may see the development of nationalism as a macro-structural change in the international system, resulting in a change in the predominant type of state actor in the system. In other words, nationalism marks a specific type identity that has important implications for the interests and actions of states.

From Dynastic State to Nation-State: The Macro-Structural Evolution of the International System

As discussed in Chapter 2, while one may be able to identify some essential form of state in any historical period, the nature of the state is subject to change as the meaning and scope of legitimate political authority changes. In order to understand the transformation in state identity represented by nationalism, it is necessary to place it in historical context by examining the broader pattern of macro-structural change associated with the evolution of the modern state. The most common version of this story is a relatively simple one. Although pretensions to a universal Christendom formally centered on the papacy and the Holy Roman Empire had continued to predominate for centuries after the fall of Rome, Europe during the feudal period was politically fragmented with cross-cutting allegiances between feudal lords producing a complex patchwork in which political authority was highly decentralized.⁵ The Peace of Westphalia (1648) that finally ended Europe's religious wars, and which for most IR scholars marked the birth of the modern state, changed all this. Not only did Westphalia formally discard the legitimacy of universal hegemony and thereby legitimize the political fragmentation of Europe, it did so by establishing the legitimacy of a more *centralized* form of particularistic political authority – the sovereign state. “By sanctifying Europe's centrifugal forces, by providing a legal basis for the developing territorial particularisms of Europe, and by terminating the vestiges of relations between superiors and inferiors, with authority emanating downward from the Emperor and the Pope, the [Peace of Westphalia]

⁵ For a succinct description of this state of affairs, see Henry Kissinger, *Diplomacy* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994), 56-7.

licensed an anarchical dynastic states system and the internal consolidation of its members.”⁶ It is this single transformation in the organization of political space – from feudalism to the sovereign state – that John Ruggie identifies as the birth of the modern era.⁷

However, while it may capture the essence of an important change in international politics, this generally accepted story of the modern state’s development must be seen as abridged and somewhat simplistic. At a minimum, it is important to recognize the implication of Kenneth Waltz’s assertion that anarchy produces like-units – at some point in the past the state as we know it may have coexisted with other types of political actors, and only came to dominate the international system over time and through competition. This is essentially the argument made by Hendrik Spruyt – that “the decline of the feudal system...did not straightforwardly lead to a system of states but gave rise to multiple institutional arrangements, any one of which – at that time – appeared to be viable.”⁸ The modern state arose out of evolutionary competition with other forms of political organization, such as city-leagues and city-states, each vying to replace the mishmash of feudal allegiances. In the end, it won out largely because it proved to be a more effective international actor.⁹ Thus, the transition from feudalism to the modern state was not as straightforward as it is often made out to be.

More importantly for purposes of this discussion, one might consider the possibility that this transition took place not in one giant leap, but through a series of smaller steps. This is the argument made by Rodney Hall. Like Spruyt, Hall argues that changes in the predominant form of political unit (i.e., the type of actor) have important implications for the international system. “Societies with different conceptions of the nature of legitimate authority choose to endow different elements of society with this authority. What or whom is regarded as sovereign is strongly conditioned by the self-understandings of

⁶ Kalevi J. Holsti, *Peace and War: Armed Conflicts and International Order 1648-1989* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 39.

⁷ John Gerard Ruggie, “Territoriality and Beyond: Problematizing Modernity in International Relations,” *International Organization* 47 (Winter 1993): 139-74.

⁸ Hendrik Spruyt, *The Sovereign State and Its Competitors: An Analysis of Systems Change* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 18.

⁹ It should be noted that Spruyt allows significant room for “social choice” in this evolutionary process. *Ibid.*, 28.

members of domestic society with respect to legitimate authority.”¹⁰ As a result, societies develop institutional forms that reflect the prevailing concepts of legitimate political authority. Since different institutional forms may result in dramatically different sets of interests, “changes in the prevailing forms of societal self-identification generate changes in [the] ‘structure of identity and interests’ and result in epochal changes in the international system.”¹¹ Hall identifies not one but three such epochal changes since the feudal era, resulting in three distinct international systems – the Augsburg system, the more commonly recognized Westphalian system, and the national-state system. Each had at its core a different form of political organization – the dynastic-state, the territorial-state, and the nation-state, respectively – based on prevailing ideas of legitimate political authority, and each had its own patterns of state behavior.

For the dynastic-state, political legitimacy was based on loyalty “toward the person of the prince, and particularly toward his confessional status within the Christian faith.”¹² This might best be seen as an earlier incarnation of the sovereign state that grew out of the first failed attempt to end the religious conflicts arising from the Protestant Reformation of the 1520s. By creating an irreparable split in Western Christianity, the Reformation shattered the religious foundation of universalism that had existed throughout the feudal period, resulting in devastating wars throughout much of central Europe by the mid-1540s.¹³ These conflicts were brought to a temporary end by the Peace of Augsburg (1555), which established the legal principle of *cuius regio eius religio* – to each region its own religion. This gave the sovereign of each principality the authority to determine the predominant religion of his subjects, and by doing so represented the first step in establishing state sovereignty as the defining principle of the international system. As Hall argues, “the Reformation and its adaptation by many European princes had created the intersocietal norm of dynastic sovereignty in the principalities and free states that adopted Protestantism....The prince could take any action that pleased him with respect to other states and princes

¹⁰ Rodney Bruce Hall, *National Collective Identity: Social Constructs and International Systems* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 31.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 6.

¹² *Ibid.*, 54.

¹³ For a discussion of the effects of the Reformation on the breakdown of universalism, see Carlton J. H. Hayes, *Three Centuries of Predominantly Agricultural Society 1500-1830*, vol. 1 of *A Political and Cultural History of Modern Europe* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1932), chapter 4.

without fear of excommunication, the interdict, or the ban.”¹⁴ He thus attained exclusive political authority over his subjects.

However, as Hall goes on to say, “by the dawn of the seventeenth century, a fifty-year-old peace of convenience had proved to be an inadequate institutional prop to a highly underdeveloped principle of toleration between Protestant and Catholic German principalities”;¹⁵ large-scale conflict resumed with the Thirty Years War (1618-48). It was only after tremendous blood-letting that the passions of religious conflict finally burned themselves out. The Peace of Westphalia that ended the war took over where Augsburg left off, employing *cuius regio eius religio* to reinforce the principle of sovereignty and expand its scope. The result was a change in the nature of the state from dynastic to territorial. While loyalty to the monarch remained an important characteristic of the territorial-state for centuries, it was the monarch’s position as leader of a territorially sovereign state that became the foundation of this loyalty, not his religion. As Hall puts it, “the prince’s legitimacy, and the state’s sovereignty, were now emancipated from the issue of confessional status.”¹⁶ Thus, the birth of the modern era, and the modern state, discussed by Ruggie actually represents the second phase in the post-feudal transformation of the international system, with territorial segmentation replacing the largely abortive attempt at religiously-grounded sovereignty.

This second phase might be seen as far more successful given both its relative longevity and the tendency for modern IR scholars to equate it with the existing international system. Yet one should not confuse success with permanence. While important elements of the Westphalian system remained, Hall argues that additional changes in the conception of political legitimacy, namely the belief in a sovereign *people*, fundamentally altered the nature of the state once again. According to him, “the twin burden of high taxes, and conscription to support the inefficiency and militarism of the old regime state, resulted in a legitimization crisis for the social order upon which this particular institutional form of collective action

¹⁴ Hall, *National Collective Identity*, 55.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 56.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 59.

was formed.”¹⁷ In order to deal with this crisis of legitimacy, “the state found that it had to expand participation...and progressively extended the franchise to ever broader circles of domestic society throughout the nineteenth century.”¹⁸ Thus, the political authority of the state became based not simply on its control of a particular territory but its representation of a people deserving of self-determination.¹⁹

This brief discussion of the evolution of the state illustrates the necessity of recognizing that the modern state has taken on more diverse forms than generally accepted, each one having significant effects on the international system as it has come to be the dominant form. Before the impact of such systemic changes is addressed, however, let us first consider the mechanism by which they have occurred. On the one hand, one could argue that system-wide changes in the predominant form of actor are the result of natural selection. Spruyt’s argument that the sovereign state had distinct survival advantages over its competitors could be expanded to argue, for instance, that the nation-state had survival advantages over the territorial-state. This is essentially the argument made by Barry Posen, as well as by Martha and Richard Cottam. Since nation-states have populations with potentially strong emotional connections to them, they are better able to mobilize their populations for purposes of national defense.²⁰ The ability to raise a national army would give the nation-state survival advantages over states still reliant on mercenary armies. Over time, such advantages might lead to a change in the population of states in the system.

As pointed out earlier, however, it is not necessary to rely on natural selection to weed out uncompetitive state forms; cultural selection (i.e., imitation and learning) may be even more important in shaping state identities, since it focuses on the intentional behavior of actors. Liah Greenfeld provides a good example of how this might have occurred with respect to nations.²¹ She argues that the modern meaning of nation – as a unique, sovereign people – first began to develop in sixteenth-century England, largely as a response to crises in its own identity. Once developed, however, the idea spread to other

¹⁷ Ibid., 71.

¹⁸ Ibid., 71.

¹⁹ It should be noted that ‘representation’ here is not meant to denote a democratic form of government.

²⁰ Barry R. Posen, “Nationalism, the Mass Army, and Military Power,” *International Security* 18, no. 2 (Autumn 1993): 80-124; Martha L. Cottam and Richard W. Cottam, *Nationalism and Politics: The Political Behavior of Nation States* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2001).

²¹ Liah Greenfeld, *Nationalism: Five Roads to Modernity* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992).

Western societies as they attempted to respond to similar identity crises through the importation of an idea that, they hoped, would solve the problem. For instance, Greenfeld argues that the French nobility responded to the disintegration of their social status by adopting the idea of the nation to provide legitimacy to their claims against the crown.

During the *Fronde* and the later years of Louis XIV's reign, the 'state' was consistently redefined as the native population of France, or the French nation...In the early eighteenth century, spokesmen of the French elite joined to these elements of the indigenous tradition the value attached to the 'nation' in England, where it had already become the ultimate source of authority and the object of supreme devotion...Thus upgraded, the state, alias nation, alias people of France, was finally freed from dependence on the king and became the symbol around which opposition to the Crown could rally and in the name of which the righting of wrongs could be legitimately and righteously demanded.²²

It was through this process of deliberate imitation, according to Greenfeld, that the idea of the nation came to be shared by states.

Of course, since the idea had to be adapted to local conditions, the development of nationalism in any given state was heavily influenced by domestic politics. Indeed, for the earliest nations such domestic conditions may have been the crucial factors that gave the nation-state its first foothold in the international system. Hall argues that "national collective identity can develop from a very large number of domestic sources of that identity, and then provide a new legitimating principle for a domestic social order. The new legitimating principles then require a new institutional form – leading to a new global social order and 'system' when aggregated with those of societies which have achieved a similar collective identity by their own path."²³ This is his first sequence of 'transformational logic' relating changes in collective identity to changes in the international system, which can be represented as follows:

$\Delta \text{collective identity} \rightarrow \Delta \text{legitimizing principles} \rightarrow \Delta \text{institutions} \rightarrow \Delta \text{domestic \& international norms/rules/principles} \rightarrow \Delta \text{systems}.$ ²⁴

In essence, changes in state identity eventually lead to changes in the international system once the new form of identity becomes accepted by enough states. This is particularly true if the states in question,

²² Ibid., 155.

²³ Hall, *National Collective Identity*, 49.

²⁴ Ibid., 49.

through their capabilities or position within the world order, are able to influence others and act as “agents of systemic transformation.”²⁵ This first sequence provides a useful explanation for how the national idea was invented in the West and eventually came to be the dominant state form.

However, there is another crucial element to this story – namely, how would such a system transformation affect those states that had not yet adopted the national idea on their own? According to Hall, “national collective identity can develop in response to what might amount to a structural condition. This condition entails the privileging of a specific institutional form of collective action, and therefore, of specific legitimating principles of that institutional form.”²⁶ Thus, the preceding sequence of transformational logic can be reversed:

$$\begin{array}{l} \Delta \text{system} \rightarrow \Delta \text{domestic \& international norms/rules/principles} \rightarrow \Delta \text{institutions} \rightarrow \\ \Delta \text{legitimizing principles} \rightarrow \Delta \text{collective identity.}^{27} \end{array}$$

This suggests that once the national idea became firmly established in the social structure of the international system, it began to exert its own influence on the states within it. While the first states to develop ‘national’ identities (e.g., England, France) did so largely in response to domestic problems, their status as major powers allowed them to establish this new form of state identity as an international norm. This created “powerful incentives [for other states] to replicate the privileged institutional forms, their legitimating principles and associated collective identities.”²⁸ Greenfeld makes a similar point, arguing that “as the sphere of influence of the core Western societies (which defined themselves as nations) expanded, societies belonging or seeking entry to the supra-societal system of which the West was the center had in fact no choice but to become nations. The development of national identity thus was essentially an *international* process, whose sources in every case but the first lay outside the evolving nation.”²⁹ In other words, non-nation states, particularly in the non-Western world, had to adopt their own identities as nations, not simply to compete and survive, but to be accepted as equals. Thus, while

²⁵ Ibid., 49.

²⁶ Ibid., 49.

²⁷ Ibid., 49.

²⁸ Ibid., 50.

²⁹ Greenfeld, *Nationalism*, 14; emphasis added.

nationalism has important systemic sources, they extend beyond a simple 'survival of the fittest' explanation. The implications of this second transformational logic will be discussed later.

The Evolution of Territorial Interests: National Self-Determination & the Roots of Nationalist Conflict

The perspective offered by Hall that the rise of nationalism and the nation-state represents a macro-structural change in the international system opens up some intriguing theoretical possibilities for understanding the potential connection between nationalism and international conflict. Since different types of states may have different interests, a change in the predominant form of state is likely to result in the development of new interests, and thus changes in state behavior. In looking at the transition from the territorial-state to the nation-state, Hall argues correctly that "it will not simply do to note that the territorial-sovereign states of modern Europe...have become nationalized, suddenly imagining themselves to have become nations, and then proceed to analyze their behavior as though the same norms of sovereignty are applicable to nation-states as had been the case for dynastic and territorial-sovereigns. Statesmen in the nationalist era have not spoken in voice of the same set of prenational interests."³⁰ It is therefore necessary to determine how the interests of the nation-state might differ from those of other types of state. This should provide the first clues to how nationalism influences their conflict-propensity.

Toward this end, let us first consider, for the sake of comparison, the kinds of interests associated with the territorial-state that preceded it. As might be surmised from its label, the primary interest of the territorial-state was territory itself. Territory has of course always been of key importance to states of all kinds. Indeed, it has been argued that all conflicts are at heart conflicts over territory.³¹ However, the change in the nature of political legitimacy associated with the territorial-state gave the importance of territory a whole new meaning. Evan Luard pointed out that "dynastic claimants had been eager for territory to add honour to the royal name, to add to the list of titles, properties, crowns and styles on

³⁰ Hall, "Territorial and National Sovereigns," 149.

³¹ John A. Vasquez, *The War Puzzle* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993); see also Gary Goertz, and Paul F. Diehl, *Territorial Changes and International Conflict* (London: Routledge, 1992).

which they could pride themselves.”³² In essence, such lands were “personal possessions of the royal line, akin to the extensive estates which might be put together by well-married families within states. They were claims to loyalty and allegiance, rather than to direct control.”³³ In contrast, John Herz suggested that the sovereignty associated with the territorial-state was based on the idea that the sovereign “has the power to constrain *his* subjects, while not being so constrainable by superior power. The decisive criterion thus is actual control of one’s ‘estates’ by one’s military power, which excludes any other power within and without.”³⁴

Yet while Westphalia had established sovereignty as a central principle of international law, it would take many decades of centralization – state-building – to give each sovereign full control over his respective territory. Remnants of feudalism, such as the continued power of the nobility, remained obstacles to the aggregation of power in the hands of the sovereign. Perhaps more importantly, the sovereign’s control of his own territory was often challenged from outside as well. As Luard noted, “if every state in demanding sovereignty for itself was equally willing to concede sovereignty to every other state, all conflict should have been avoided.”³⁵ Yet sovereignty was frequently disregarded by states eager to accrue more power for themselves. During the feudal period, custom and convention associated with shared religious beliefs provided at least some normative constraints on international competition. However, the collapse of the old order meant that “dynastic claims to territory based upon custom or ancient privilege no longer held the sway they once had.”³⁶ *Raison d’état*, which “asserted that the well-being of the state justified whatever means were employed to further it,”³⁷ became the new guiding principle for territorially-based sovereigns.

This had a significant effect on the importance of territory to state interests. According to Mayall, the rise of the territorial-state resulted in “the translation of territory from being just somewhere where

³² Evan Luard, *The Balance of Power: The System of International Relations, 1648-1815* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1992), 174.

³³ *Ibid.*, 174.

³⁴ John H. Herz, “Rise and Demise of the Territorial State,” *World Politics* 9 (July 1957): 479.

³⁵ Luard, *The Balance of Power*, 111.

³⁶ Hall, *National Collective Identity*, 99.

³⁷ Kissinger, *Diplomacy*, 58.

people hunt, or farm or go to the factory into the ultimate object of political life.”³⁸ As such, the value of territory to the state was dramatically increased. Mayall goes on to argue that “the value which sovereign states can not sacrifice without, as it were, committing suicide, is their independence. What this means in practice is that they cannot surrender their territorial integrity.”³⁹ However, as Luard suggested, “it was no longer any territory to which they might be able to put forward a dynastic claim, or where their own religion was under threat...It was *particular* territories, believed to be of special value to the state concerned.”⁴⁰ Specifically, states sought territories that could enhance their security. The borders of dynastic-states often “had little geographical or strategic logic”⁴¹ since they simply represented the personal possessions of the sovereign. So long as these dynastic claims remained legitimate, “the absence of logical frontiers had not been such a significant impetus to international violence.”⁴² However, once these claims became subordinated to *raison d'état*, sovereigns had a new incentive “to round frontiers to create more self-sufficient units.”⁴³ As Hall puts it, “territorial sovereigns had thus developed a passion for contiguous, defensible territories, and many conflicts were fought in order to unite divided dynastic holdings.”⁴⁴

The exception to the desire for territorial contiguity was the drive to establish overseas colonies. Yet Hall attributes this to the new territoriality of the state as well. He argues that the change in the predominant form of state fundamentally altered the existing system of alliances from an essentially bipolar one based on religion (the alignment of France being a significant exception) to a more multipolar one “increasingly characterized by a loose system of very short term alliances.”⁴⁵ As a result of the “increasing uncertainty in alliance politics due to the delegitimation of religious-military affiliations,”⁴⁶ states were forced to create large standing armies, which in turn made the acquisition of additional

³⁸ Mayall, *Nationalism and International Society*, 19.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 20.

⁴⁰ Luard, *The Balance of Power*, 174.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 176.

⁴² Hall, *National Collective Identity*, 99.

⁴³ Luard, *The Balance of Power*, 176.

⁴⁴ Hall, *National Collective Identity*, 99.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 94.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 94.

revenues essential. Much of this revenue came from the acquisition of overseas colonies. Yet Hall is quick to point out that “the major incentive to establish colonies for eighteenth-century mercantilist regimes lay in the extension of the sovereignty of the state (and its monarch) to the remote colony, not for purposes of accruing status to either, but for the capability, unavailable on the continent, to leverage the terms of trade to the advantage of the mother country and to shield it from competition.”⁴⁷ Thus, despite their distance and disconnectedness, such territories still possessed strategic value for the state. The macro-structural change in state identity associated with the rise of the territorial-state thus produced significant changes in state interests and behavior.

Of course, the creation of a territorial-state with reasonably defensible boundaries says little about the ethnic composition of the population within them. Indeed, territorial-states often tended to be multinational entities with little concern for such matters. This was not a serious issue so long as their populations felt no sense of common identity, or at least were uninterested in expressing it politically. It mattered little to any given nationality whether they were ruled by co-nationals or by ‘foreigners.’ With the advent of nationalism, however, the ethnic composition of the state became an issue of great importance. Multinational states (e.g., Austria-Hungary) found it increasingly difficult to maintain political legitimacy as it came to depend more on the state’s representation of a single people in whose name sovereignty was held. As Hall puts it, “national-sovereign identity problematizes the issue of title to land as dynastic and territorial-sovereign legal claims are delegitimated.”⁴⁸ As the territorial-state gave way to the nation-state, state interests also took on a distinctly national flavor.

The most obvious ‘national’ interest is national self-determination – “the belief that each nation has a right to constitute an independent state and determine its own government.”⁴⁹ Originating in 19th century Europe “as a natural corollary”⁵⁰ of the growing nationalism of the time, it had by the end of

⁴⁷ Ibid., 96.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 143.

⁴⁹ Alfred Cobban, *The Nation State and National Self-Determination* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1970), 39.

⁵⁰ Hurst Hannum, *Autonomy, Sovereignty, and Self-Determination: The Accommodation of Conflicting Rights*, Revised Edition. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996), 27.

World War I attained an important place in international affairs. It was applied (selectively and imperfectly) in the Treaty of Versailles (1919), and though it was excluded from the Covenant of the League of Nations, it did appear in the United Nations Charter.⁵¹ Of course, given the fact that its application depended on the legal codification of the inherently ambiguous concept of ‘nation,’ it should not be surprising that such attempts were often plagued by disputes, not just over what groups were deserving of it, but over its very meaning.⁵² Yet despite such disputes, Hurst Hannum suggests that “perhaps no contemporary norm of international law has been so vigorously promoted or widely accepted as the right of all peoples to self-determination.”⁵³

This new interest on the part of ethnically distinct peoples in self-determination could be expressed in a wide range of ways. In cases where there were ethnic differences between ruler and ruled, self-determination might take the form of a movement to throw off foreign rule (national liberation movement). Alternatively, ethnically distinct regions of a particular state might seek to secede (separatist movement), or failing this at least to gain some significant measure of political and cultural autonomy. If the nation were divided among different states, self-determination might lead a state to claim authority over co-nationals outside its territory (irredentist movement), or alternatively those left out might seek to be absorbed into the broader nation-state (reintegrationist movement).⁵⁴ Even if such movements failed to establish borders that fully encompassed the nation, there might be a strong national interest in protecting one’s co-nationals still living under foreign rule.

These exclusively ‘national’ interests provide an important clue as to why nationalism may be associated with an increased propensity for conflict between states. As new groups achieved national consciousness and began to demand the right of self-determination through the establishment of their own states, attempts to redraw the political map often resulted in war. As Carlton Hayes argued, “modern

⁵¹ For a discussion of the early attempts to apply the doctrine of national self-determination, see Thomas D. Musgrave, *Self-Determination and National Minorities* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), chapter 2.

⁵² See Lee C. Buchheit, *Secession: The Legitimacy of Self-Determination* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978), 4-6.

⁵³ Hannum, *Autonomy, Sovereignty, and Self-Determination*, 27.

⁵⁴ See Ronald J. Glossup, *Confronting War: An Examination of Humanity’s Most Pressing Problem*, 3d ed. (Jefferson: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 1994), 76-8.

nationalism began its association with international war through popular attempts to realise the ideal of national self-determination.”⁵⁵ In fact, the long list of nationalist wars that he identifies are specifically referred to as wars of national self-determination. Christopher Dandeker makes a similar point, arguing that “it is precisely because national identity is bound up with territory and political autonomy that national conflicts are fundamentally associated with the risk of violence: control of the instruments of coercion and regulation over territory and thus the framework within which other activities are decided upon are at issue.”⁵⁶

In addition, the inability to draw clear lines of demarcation between national groups brought about new sources of conflict – irredentism and the protection of conationals in other states – which “have gradually altered the character, if not the reputation, of nationalist warfare.”⁵⁷ As Hall puts it,

the emergence of national-sovereign collective identity [nationalism] created a number of new sources of potential conflict in the international system. Extraterritorial expressions of allegiance to a people with shared language, culture, or history...became potential bases for the advancement of irredentist territorial claims, or conflictual secessionist movements. National-sovereign identity problematized ethnic, linguistic and cultural minorities, territorial integrity and security, migration, titular claims to dynastic lands, and the integrity and identity of polyglot states. Territorial-sovereign legal claims were delegitimated and peaceful resolution of disputes became more difficult in the absence of consensual knowledge regarding systemic legitimating principles.⁵⁸

In essence, the advent of nationalism changed the way states defined themselves and their interests, resulting in new issues being brought onto the world stage for which there were no ready solutions. From this point of view, nationalist conflict could be seen as the result of a lack of established norms regarding the relationship between state and nation. This would imply that the relationship between nationalism and conflict is not constant, but instead changes as issues are resolved and knowledge becomes shared. Such an interpretation fits with Hayes’ argument that as nationalism has passed through different stages, its impact on war has changed.

⁵⁵ Carlton J. H. Hayes, *Essays on Nationalism* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1926), 133.

⁵⁶ Christopher Dandeker, “Nationalism, Nation-States, and Violence at the End of the Twentieth Century: A Sociological View,” in *Nationalism and Violence*, ed. Christopher Dandeker (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1998), 26.

⁵⁷ Hayes, *Essays on Nationalism*, 138.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 169.

Although this may on the surface provide support for the proposition that nationalism may result in increased conflict between states, closer consideration reveals that such a conclusion is premature. While the creation of a new state identity may produce new issues for states to fight over, it may at the same time eliminate other issues of contention. For instance, the change from dynastic-states to territorial-states resulted in “the delegitimation of religious ideas and affiliations as sources of interstate conflict.”⁵⁹ Thus, while changes in state interests may result in changes in the issues over which states will fight, it would be incorrect to conclude that these new issues are somehow inherently more prone to producing interstate conflict than their predecessors. Since issues rise and decline over time,⁶⁰ the linkage between nationalism and conflict may prove to be as historically contingent as the nation itself. James Kellas suggests that the issues underlying nationalist conflict may be resolved as nation-states are consolidated and irredentist claims are satisfied.⁶¹ It is therefore conceivable that the incidence of nationalist conflict will eventually *decrease*. Of course, since national identities are themselves subject to redefinition, such a prediction may seem premature. However, this would demonstrate that it is not nationalism per se that is prone to conflict, but the lack of accepted norms regarding the drawing of national boundaries that arose from a macro-structural change in the international system. From a macro-structural perspective, therefore, the conflict proneness of nationalism is dependent on the degree of disagreement over such boundaries.

Nation as ‘Role’: The Micro-Structural Impact of Nationalism on State Behavior

While examining the macro-structural impact of nationalism yields some important insights into state behavior, it provides only a partial answer to the question of whether nationalism makes states more prone to engage in conflict. For one thing, although a change in type identity may lead a state to pursue a new set of interests, *how* it does so remains an open question. Whether a nation-state uses diplomacy or force may be highly dependent on the specific political, economic, and strategic circumstances it faces.

⁵⁹ Hall, “Territorial and National Sovereigns,” 152.

⁶⁰ See Holsti, *Peace and War*.

⁶¹ Kellas, *The Politics of Nationalism and Ethnicity*, 148-49.

As such, the macro-structural dimension of nationalism may only inform us of the basic parameters of a state's behavior. It may tell us for what a state is willing to use force to defend, and why, but it will be unlikely to allow us to predict under what specific circumstances it will do so. This may require us to fall back on more traditional forms of analysis – e.g., domestic politics, balance of power.

However, this leaves another issue. For many scholars, the conflict propensity of nationalism goes well beyond the problem of disagreements over national boundaries brought about by changes in type identity. As remarked in the last chapter, many subscribe to the view that even if a true nation-state were successfully established, there would be no guarantee that this would bring an end to nationalist conflict. Recall Hayes' assertion that nationalism might be heightened once claims of self-determination are successfully achieved. After all, "how, without militarism," Hayes asked, "could national rights be guarded, national interests promoted, and national honour vindicated?"⁶² Yet one has to wonder how this is different from any other kind of state, given the frequency with which states of every kind throughout history have resorted to force of arms to guarantee their security, wealth, and prestige. Why would a nation-state be any more prone to militarism than any other type of state? What would make an established nation-state with few (if any) remaining irredentist claims pursue an aggressive foreign policy? A micro-structural analysis of nationalism and state behavior may provide some important insights into these questions. A state's behavior in pursuit of its 'national' interests may be partly dependent on considerations of politics and power, but it will also be dependent on something else – the *role* it enacts in its relations with others. Thus, in order to understand a state's propensity for nationalist conflict, it is necessary to analyze the dynamics of nationalist role formation and how these dynamics can set the stage for such conflict.

The Ideational Security Dilemma: The Dynamics of Role Formation & the Constitution of Threat

As discussed in Chapter 2, the role that a state assumes in different circumstances represents its conception of the situation and how it should behave. However, as already pointed out by Wendt, states

⁶² Ibid., 190.

do not necessarily have the ability to choose their roles freely, particularly in cases where the level of interaction with other states is high; roles are constituted through interaction with Others. Recall the mirroring process described by Wendt that occurs during a hypothetical first encounter between two actors. Each brings with it a set of a priori ideas and interests, and assumes a role (and projects a counter-role) intended to achieve those interests. Each acts toward the other on the basis of their assumed role and how they have defined the interaction, signaling to the other what its counter-role should be and how it is expected to respond. Learning occurs if the two sides adjust their initial ideas about the other, which may eventually lead to the development of shared knowledge.

However, the fact that states may develop shared knowledge says little about what form that knowledge will take. One might expect the development of mutual understanding between states to lead to more cooperative behavior, and indeed constructivism is generally viewed as being more focused on the possibilities for international cooperation. J. Samuel Barkin notes that “in practice in the United States [constructivism] tends to be liberal-idealist.”⁶³ Members of both the realist and liberal camps have criticized constructivism based on this – the former arguing that such a position is too idealistic, the latter arguing that it negates much of the distinction between constructivism and neoliberalism.⁶⁴ Yet Wendt argues that social learning is, or at least should be, “analytically neutral between cooperation and conflict,”⁶⁵ suggesting that the same process of social learning can be used to explain the development of a Hobbesian culture of anarchy in which states pursue egoistic interests (i.e., realism). He explains this as follows:

If Ego casts Alter in the role of an object to be manipulated for the gratification of his own needs..., then he will engage in behavior that does not take Alter’s security needs into account in anything but a purely instrumental sense. If Alter correctly reads Ego’s ‘perspective’ he will ‘reflect’ Ego’s ‘appraisal’ back on himself, and conclude that he has no standing or rights in this relationship. This will threaten Alter’s basic needs, and as such rather than simply accept this positioning Alter will adopt an egoistic identity himself..., and act accordingly toward Ego. Eventually, by repeatedly engaging in

⁶³ J. Samuel Barkin, “Realist Constructivism,” *International Studies Review* 5 (September 2003): 336.

⁶⁴ See John J. Mearsheimer, “The False Promise of International Institutions,” *International Security* 19, no. 3 (Winter 1994/95): 5-49; and Jennifer Sterling-Folker, “Competing Paradigms or Birds of a Feather? Constructivism and Neoliberal Institutionalism Compared,” *International Studies Quarterly* 44 (March 2000): 97-119.

⁶⁵ Alexander Wendt, “Constructing International Politics,” *International Security* 20, no. 1 (Summer 1995): 76.

practices that ignore each other's needs, or practices of power politics, Alter and Ego will create and internalize the shared knowledge that they are enemies, locking in a Hobbesian structure.⁶⁶

Thus, social learning may lead not to a shared sense of friendship, but to a shared sense of threat. As Jutta Weldes, et al, point out, "insecurity is itself the product of processes of identity construction in which the self and other, or multiple others, are constituted."⁶⁷

The possibility that threats may be socially constructed inevitably leads to the question – threats to what? Realists have long maintained an essentially material conception of threat – namely, threats to the physical security of the state. In essence, "the nature of [states] is assumed to be both given and fixed...and security is thus understood to mean securing these fixed entities against objective and external threats."⁶⁸ Yet as we have already discussed, the state is not a fixed entity; it is socially constructed, as are its interests. Thus, threats to the state cannot be purely objective, but can only be understood in terms of those socially constructed interests. Of course, this is not to say that physical threats to the state do not exist, simply that such threats only have meaning within the context of the social interactions in question (recall the nuclear weapons example mentioned in Chapter 2). However, while it is important to understand the social context in which physical threats exist, it is equally important to consider the possibility that the threats themselves may be ideational, not just physical, in nature. In other words, a state may perceive a threat to its *identity*, not just its physical security. To understand how identity can come under threat, it is necessary to briefly revisit the issue of what identity is.

Identity depends on the maintenance of differences that serve to distinguish one actor from another. As William Connolly argues, "these differences are essential to its being. If they did not coexist

⁶⁶ Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 332.

⁶⁷ Jutta Weldes, et al., "Introduction: Constructing Insecurity," in *Cultures of Insecurity: States, Communities, and the Production of Danger*, ed. Jutta Weldes, et al. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 10. For similar arguments, see Bill McSweeney, *Security, Identity and Interests: A Sociology of International Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999) and Keith Krause, "Critical Theory and Security Studies: The Research Programme of 'Critical Security Studies'," *Cooperation and Conflict* 33 (September 1998): 298-333.

⁶⁸ Weldes, "Introduction," 9.

as differences, [the identity] would not exist in its distinctness and solidity.”⁶⁹ This can make identity “a slippery, insecure experience.”⁷⁰ If one’s role identity were entirely self-defined, then the roles and actions of others would not endanger it. However, since “one cannot enact role identities by oneself,”⁷¹ their security will depend on the Other’s willingness to play along. Since there is no guarantee that the role a state seeks to enact (and the corresponding counter-role that it seeks to project on the Other) will be compatible with the role that the Other seeks to enact (and the corresponding counter-role that it seeks to project back), the state’s identity is “vulnerable to the tendency of entities it would so define to counter, resist, overturn, or subvert definitions applied to them.”⁷² Thus, maintaining one’s own role identity may involve a struggle with Others who resist the implications it has for their own role identities, and vice versa – i.e., they may become involved in a role conflict (see Chapter 2). For Connolly, the degree of conflict involved will depend on a number of factors, including

variations in the degree to which differences from self-identity are treated as complementary identities, contending identities, negative identities, or nonidentities; variations in the extent to which the voice of difference is heard as that with which one should remain engaged or as a symptom of sickness, inferiority, or evil; variations in the degree to which self-choice or cultural determination is attributed to alter-identities; variations in the degree to which one’s own claim to identity is blocked by the power of opposing claimants...and so on.⁷³

In some cases, “a powerful identity will strive to constitute a range of differences as *intrinsically* evil, irrational, abnormal, mad, sick, primitive, monstrous, dangerous, or anarchical – as other. It does so in order to secure itself as intrinsically good, coherent, complete or rational and in order to protect itself from the other that would unravel its self-certainty and capacity for collective mobilization if it established its legitimacy.”⁷⁴

Such role conflicts can be very serious. Roles help bring order to an otherwise chaotic world by providing states with a conceptual framework with which to understand the world around them and how

⁶⁹ William E. Connolly, *Identity\Difference: Democratic Negotiations of Political Paradox* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), 64.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 64.

⁷¹ Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*, 227.

⁷² Connolly, *Identity\Difference*, 64.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 64-5.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 65-6.

they should act within it. If that role were challenged, it would be difficult for the state to find its footing on the world stage; it would be plagued by uncertainty and self-doubt. Thus, when roles come into conflict, the actors involved will likely try to defend against the ideational threat by seeking to reinforce their own identities. This is noted by both Wendt and Hall. In discussing the prospects for systemic transformation through increased interdependence, Wendt argues that “states may respond to these systemic processes by redoubling their efforts to defend egoistic identities.”⁷⁵ Hall makes a similar observation by linking individual and collective identities, arguing that

individual identity is threatened by hazards to those collective identities that are constitutive of individual identity. Therefore individuals perceive that their interest lies squarely in the defense and promotion of this collective identity. The fundamental, even primordial, motive (or ‘interest’) of self-preservation will then ensure that individuals will come fully to the defense of the collective identity that they see as fundamentally constitutive of their selves when they feel that collective identity is threatened.⁷⁶

The aggregation of this individual ‘will-to-manifest-identity’ produces a similar state interest in the defense of state identity.

The result of this might be termed an ‘ideational security dilemma.’⁷⁷ In its more traditional form, the security dilemma refers to the fact that actions taken by a state to guarantee its own security (e.g., increasing military spending) may make its neighbors less secure, prompting them to reciprocate by increasing their own capabilities and thereby undermining the security that the first state had sought to maintain. The result of this dilemma “may be a spiral of ever-increasing levels of belligerence as [states] try to respond to the prior actions of others.”⁷⁸ As commonly noted in the literature on interstate conflict, such a ‘conflict spiral’ has the potential to escalate into violence. The same concept can be applied to ideational security – actions taken by a state to guarantee its ideational security (i.e., the security of its

⁷⁵ Wendt, “Identity and Structural Change in International Politics,” 56.

⁷⁶ Hall, *National Collective Identity*, 38.

⁷⁷ John Cotter uses a similar concept – ‘cultural security dilemma’ – to explain conflicts between different ethnic groups in a domestic setting. See John Cotter, “Cultural Security Dilemmas and Ethnic Conflict in Georgia,” *Journal of Conflict Studies* 19, no. 1 (Spring 1999): 106-31. It should also be noted again here that the more traditional idea of the security dilemma has been employed by realists to explain ethnic conflict within states. See Barry R. Posen, “The Security Dilemma and Ethnic Conflict,” *Survival* 35, no. 1 (Spring 1993): 27-47.

⁷⁸ Greg Cashman, *What Causes War? An Introduction to Theories of International Conflict* (New York: Lexington Books, 1993), 185.

identity) may make an Other's identity less secure, prompting it to reciprocate by reinforcing its own identity and thereby potentially undermining the identity that the first state had sought to maintain. As with the more traditional security dilemma in realist theory, such an ideational security dilemma could produce an escalation as each party seeks to safeguard its own identity at the other's expense. This could lead to increasing distrust, and potentially to violent conflict.

Identity Threats & the Activation of Banal Nationalism: A Reactive Model of Nationalist Conflict

The concept of an ideational security dilemma provides important insights into the question of nationalist conflict. Like states in general, nations represent a form of particularism in that their identities are defined in terms of their uniqueness relative to other nations. As William Pfaff points out, "nationalism...has no universality. It is impossible to be a nationalist as such, only a German or Croatian or American nationalist."⁷⁹ It should be noted that this directly contradicts Greenfeld's assertion that "*nationalism is not necessarily a form of particularism*. It is a political ideology..., and as such it does not have to be identified with any particular community. A nation coextensive with humanity is in no way a contradiction in terms."⁸⁰ Given the common understanding and usage of nationalism, however, such an assertion cannot hold. Most scholars of nationalism recognize that the belief in the uniqueness of nation is an essential part of nationalist doctrine.⁸¹ To expand its meaning to include the possibility of a 'universal nation' would rob the term of its utility. As such, the security of a state's national identity is dependent on its ability to maintain that uniqueness – i.e., the separation of Self and Other. This includes its ability to enact nationalist roles without interference or contradiction from outside actors.

Of course, since a nation-state's ability to independently define its roles is no less constrained than that of any other type of state, the potential for nationalist role conflict arises. As with the mirroring process between egoistic actors discussed by Wendt, such a role conflict could lead to the mutual

⁷⁹ William Pfaff, *The Wrath of Nations: Civilization and the Furies of Nationalism* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1993), 14.

⁸⁰ Greenfeld, *Nationalism*, 7.

⁸¹ For example, see John Breuilly, *Nationalism and the State*, 2d ed. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1993), 2.

constitution of a relationship of enmity between the actors in which each seeks to defend itself against a perceived threat – not necessarily to its physical self, but to its national identity. This may help to explain how nationalism could influence a nation-state to pursue a more aggressive foreign policy even when its main nationalist goals (i.e., self-determination) are fulfilled. Stephen Van Evera has argued that “the effects of nationalism depend heavily on the beliefs of nationalist movements, especially their self-images and their images of their neighbors.”⁸² When these self-images come into conflict, for instance “if nations embrace self-justifying historical myths, or adopt distorted pictures of their own and others’ current conduct and character that exaggerate the legitimacy of their own cause,” then nationalism may become a strong motivating factor for the pursuit of aggressive foreign policies toward that other state.⁸³ “If carried to extreme,” Van Evera argues, “such myths can also transform nationalism...from a purely self-liberating enterprise into a hegemonistic enterprise.”⁸⁴

From this perspective, nationalist conflict represents, not an instrumental tool of political elites, but the logical outcome of an ideational security dilemma between actors with radically different conceptions of both themselves and the other, in which each seeks to defend its identity against challenges (real or perceived) from the other. This is an essentially reactive model of nationalist conflict. Such a model helps to relate the more extreme manifestations of nationalism that are so often the subject of study and the ‘banal nationalism’ of established states that often slips under the radar. Michael Billig uses this term “to cover the ideological habits which enable the established nations of the West to be reproduced.”⁸⁵ In essence, he argues that “in the established nations [e.g., the United States, Britain, etc.], there is a continual ‘flagging’, or reminding, of nationhood....In so many little ways, the citizenry are daily reminded of their national place in a world of nations. However, this reminding is so familiar, so continual, that it is not consciously registered as reminding. The metonymic image of banal nationalism is not a flag which is consciously being waved with fervent passion; it is the flag hanging unnoticed on

⁸² Stephen Van Evera, “Hypotheses on Nationalism and War,” in *Nationalism and Ethnic Conflict*, ed. Michael E. Brown, et al. (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1997), 278.

⁸³ Ibid., 278.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 278.

⁸⁵ Michael Billig, *Banal Nationalism*. (London: SAGE Publications, 1995), 6.

the public building.”⁸⁶ It is only in moments of crisis when the public is called forth to rally around the flag that nationalism manifests itself more openly. In other words, while nationalism may always be present below the surface, it becomes ‘active’ as a reaction to outside threats.

The application of such a reactive model of nationalism to the analysis of a particular state’s behavior would involve three basic steps. First, it would be necessary to identify the primary role that the state in question seeks to enact. Of course, since states may seek to enact different roles in different situations, it is necessary to place careful boundaries on the analysis. One could do so either by identifying a particularly important role that is essential to the enactment of other roles, or by confining the analysis to behaviors associated with a lesser role. Since it may be difficult to isolate behaviors associated with one role from those associated with another, the first strategy would probably be more useful. It should be noted that even a state’s primary role may change significantly over time. This would require either a careful delineation of temporal boundaries, or a careful examination of the effect that such a change might have on the model. Since this dissertation will generally focus on only one primary role, the issue of how to deal with such variability will be left for others.

Once a primary role is identified, it is necessary to determine whether or not a role conflict exists – i.e., if the role that the state seeks to enact is in conflict with a counter-role that an Other seeks to impose on it. This actually involves two separate issues. One is which Other or Others to include in the analysis. This is not an unimportant question, since the choice of Other will likely have a major impact on whether or not one finds a role conflict; a state’s role may conflict with one state but not another. While the choice is one that can largely be left up to the analyst, it is important to keep in mind that conclusions drawn from the analysis of one set of relations may not be generalizable to others. In other words, even if nationalism makes State A more prone to conflict with State B, that does not necessarily mean that it will make State A more prone to conflict with State C. In a reactive model of nationalist conflict, nationalism’s conflict propensity is dependent on the relationship in question.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 8.

Once the choice of Other is made, the second issue in determining whether or not a role conflict exists is identifying the Other's role, and the counter-role it seeks to impose on the state being studied. Identifying such a role involves all of the considerations mentioned before regarding the establishment of proper analytical boundaries. The ability to identify a key role that is central to the enactment of others will likely be helpful. However, in determining its corresponding counter-role, such boundaries may by necessity need to be broader. It is possible that, even if the Other's role remains relatively unchanged, the counter-role it seeks to project on the state in question may change over time as circumstances in their relationship change. Indeed, given the dynamic nature of role formation, this seems likely. Thus, one must be prepared to address multiple counter-roles. It might be noted here that it may not be necessary to examine the counter-role that the state seeks to project back on the Other, at least not in vigorous detail, if one is merely interested in ascertaining the nationalism's impact on its behavior. However, if one were to analyze the effect of nationalism on both state's foreign policies then this would certainly be a necessity. While such an analysis of a bilateral relationship might be useful for understanding other issues – e.g., the development of rivalry – this will be left for future study.

The final step in utilizing a reactive model of nationalist conflict is to analyze the result of the role conflict – i.e., its effect on the behavior of the state in question. This also involves two separate issues. One is the degree to which the role conflict produces a nationalist reaction. While evidence of some level of banal nationalism might be observable, the key would be to see if those latent feelings are activated as a reaction against the counter-role that the Other seeks to project onto the state. In other words, is there a nationalist backlash? Of course, the mere existence of nationalist attitudes towards an Other would not be enough to support a reactive model; they might exist for other reasons. In addition, while the author argues that there is more to nationalism than instrumental manipulation of popular sentiments, one cannot rule out the possibility that such attempts might exist. The trick, therefore, would be to separate any such usages from the more 'natural' reactions being posited here.

If one can establish that active nationalism is the result of a reaction against threats to the state's national identity, then what remains is to determine whether or not that reaction makes the state more

prone to conflict. In other words, will the state resort to force in order to protect an identity that is under threat? This brings up an interesting question. While it is easy to conceive of a state using force to pursue tangible benefits like territory or wealth, or even intangible benefits like prestige, would a state go to war over something as abstract as its identity or its role in the world? This seems rather unlikely. It might make more sense to treat the conflict potential of nationalism as indirect. Reactive nationalism may make a state more prone to conflict with an Other by creating or reinforcing a sense of distrust between the two parties, thereby making it more likely for the state to view the Other's actions as provocative or threatening. Under the right circumstances, this could lead to the outbreak of hostilities. From this perspective, nationalism may be a contributing factor to interstate conflict, but would not be a cause by itself. In essence, it would at best be an intervening variable. Thus, depending on the situation, even a highly nationalistic state reacting to the actions of an ideationally-threatening Other might not resort to force. Other political and strategic conditions would certainly be required. Nationalism may have a significant effect on a state's foreign policy behavior, and may increase the potential for conflict, but it is far from the war-inducing ideology that it is often made out to be. A reactive model of nationalist conflict thus offers a far more realistic appraisal of nationalism's conflict potential.

Such a model has another advantage as well. Like instrumentalism, it is more analytical than primordialism and does not treat nationalism as some eternal constant. It allows for the possibility that nationalism may fluctuate over time in response to various stimuli. At the same time, however, a reactive model of nationalist conflict does not bleed the concept of nationalism of all emotional content by reducing it to the self-interest of rational political actors, as does instrumentalism. Such actors may indeed be self-interested, but those interests are understood and defined in terms of the often emotional idea of nationalism. This leaves room for the possibility that, while nationalism may often be caught up in domestic politics, the nationalist sentiments of both the public and elites (or at least some portion of them) are genuine. A reactive model thus avoids many of the problems associated with primordialism and instrumentalism, and does so in a way that focuses attention on the importance of international politics.

Applying the Reactive Model of Nationalist Conflict to Chinese Foreign Policy: Previewing the Empirical Case

The possibility that nationalism may be reactive in nature is not a unique proposition. Indeed, Shuisheng Zhao has suggested as much in his own attempt “to explore whether there is a direct linkage between Chinese nationalism and international aggression by examining different orientations of the nationalism.”⁸⁷ However, weaknesses in his argument only serve to obscure the importance of his conclusions regarding nationalism and China’s international behavior. Indeed, the way in which he presents his argument lays bare the problems inherent in addressing the issue without developing a broader theoretical understanding of nationalism’s impact on state behavior, problems that may be addressed by utilizing the reactive model of nationalist conflict outlined above. A brief examination of Zhao’s argument thus provides a useful segue to the empirical portion of this dissertation.

Zhao outlines three perspectives of Chinese nationalism – nativism, antitraditionalism, and pragmatism – each “rooted in a different assessment of the sources of national weakness and advocates a best approach to revitalize China.”⁸⁸ Nativism views such weakness as the result of “the subversion of indigenous Chinese virtues,” and is thus associated with “calls for a return to Confucian tradition.”⁸⁹ In contrast, antitraditionalism views Confucian traditions themselves as the problem and advocates a wholesale modernization of Chinese culture. Pragmatism might be seen as a middle ground between the first two perspectives – it “sees foreign economic exploitation and cultural infiltration as a source of China’s weakness, but believes that the lack of modernization is the reason why China became an easy target for Western imperialism.”⁹⁰ Zhao then associates each of these perspectives with a particular international orientation – confrontation, adaptation, and assertion, respectively.

Although Zhao suggests that the first two perspectives still “lurk in the background,” he argues that “pragmatic nationalism has become the dominant thinking of Chinese people and their leaders since

⁸⁷ Suisheng Zhao, “Chinese Nationalism and Its International Orientations,” *Political Science Quarterly* 115 (Spring 2000): 2.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 9.

the 1980s.”⁹¹ This pragmatic nationalism has three basic characteristics. The first is instrumentality – i.e., nationalism serves as a political tool that allows the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) to maintain its legitimacy. Second, it is defined more in terms of loyalty to the state than loyalty to the Han as an ethnic group. Finally, it is *reactive* – “it tends to become strong in response to perceived foreign pressures that are said to erode, corrode, or endanger the national interest of China.”⁹² As a result, Zhao argues that nationalism does not necessarily make China more prone to engage in conflict. “Being instrumental and state-led, nationalism may be used to flex China’s muscles in international affairs if it is deemed desirable by Chinese leaders to enhance their political power. But being reactive to international currents, nationalist sentiments may decrease if perceived external pressure diminishes and if China’s confidence in international affairs increases.”⁹³ In essence, Chinese nationalism is primarily defensive in nature.⁹⁴

While Zhao’s characterization of the international orientation of Chinese nationalism as essentially reactive and defensive is a useful one, and in the opinion of the author is largely correct, the way in which he reaches this conclusion is highly problematic. First, the three perspectives of Chinese nationalism that he suggests are flawed because they do not take into account the historical changes involved in the evolution of Chinese national identity. While nativism and antitraditionalism played important roles in the development of Chinese nationalism, and continued to influence China into the modern day, such sentiments do not represent distinct expressions of nationalism. Indeed, as will be argued in the next chapter, equating support for Confucian tradition with true nationalist sentiment is a fundamental error; the former was an expression of a dramatically different form of identity than the latter. For its part, antitraditionalism might better be described as a transitional stage between Confucian tradition and modern nationalism.

Second, Zhao’s characterization of pragmatic nationalism is flawed by its overreliance on an instrumentalist view of nationalism. He supports this approach by arguing that China’s “pragmatic

⁹¹ Ibid., 16.

⁹² Ibid., 21.

⁹³ Ibid., 23.

⁹⁴ See also David Shambaugh, “Containment or Engagement of China?: Calculating Beijing’s Responses,” *International Security* 21, no. 2 (Fall 1996): 180-209.

nationalism does not have a fixed, objectified, and eternally defined content. Instead, it has been continually remade to fit the needs of its creators and consumers.”⁹⁵ While this may be true, the denial of a primordial Chinese nationalism does not necessarily lend credence to a wholly instrumentalist interpretation. As has already been discussed, one of the major problems with instrumentalism is that it denies the ‘genuineness’ of nationalist feelings among the public and elites. To suggest that Chinese nationalism is simply a cynical tool of political manipulation risks severely misinterpreting it and the impact it has on China’s behavior. The fact that nationalism helps to prop up the crumbling foundations of communist rule is difficult to deny. However, that does not mean that one can reduce Chinese nationalism to an epiphenomenon of Chinese domestic politics.

Third, despite his use of instrumentalism, Zhao’s arguments seem ungrounded in broader theories of nationalism, much less a general theory of nationalist conflict. As a result, he seems to fall victim to the common malady of China scholars – the treatment of China as a unique case. By not examining Chinese nationalism within a broader context, it becomes impossible to come to any generalizable conclusions regarding the impact of nationalism on state behavior. Of course, Zhao’s stated intention is not to address the issue of nationalist conflict in general, though he begins his analysis lamenting the lack of ‘convincing’ explanations of it; his goal is simply to address the question of whether nationalism makes *China* more prone to international conflict. Yet by not going further to develop a theoretically-grounded explanation, he risks getting the right answer for the wrong reasons. By employing a reactive model of nationalist conflict to the issue of Chinese foreign policy, the author hopes to avoid these problems and offer a more theoretically-informed view of the conflict potential of Chinese nationalism, one that may offer clues to the broader issue of nationalist conflict.

At this time, it is necessary to review the theoretical argument being made regarding the affect of nationalism on state behavior, and lay out the specific propositions to be examined in Part II. Nationalism is constituted by the international system in two ways. From a macro-structural perspective, nationalism represents an expression of a particular type of state whose interests are distinct from those of other types

⁹⁵ Zhao, “Chinese Nationalism and Its International Orientations,” 18.

of states. Such interests include the self-determination of a particular national group. This sets the parameters on the behavior of the state. From a micro-structural perspective, banal nationalism may become active if the nationalist-informed role that a state seeks to enact comes into conflict with the counter-role that an Other seeks to project onto it. This may lead to escalating tensions, and potentially to violent conflict, as each state seeks to defend its identity against outside threats. Taken together, these macro- and micro-dimensions of social structure help to explain nationalism's effect on state behavior. In order to evaluate this argument with respect to the China case, it is necessary to answer three main questions.

First, can Chinese nationalism be conceptualized as being constituted by the international system? If the answer is no, then the theoretical model outlined above will do little to explain the impact of nationalism on Chinese foreign policy. However, it will be demonstrated in Chapter 5 that Chinese nationalism can indeed be conceptualized in this way. Specifically, it will be shown that the development of Chinese nationalism was a direct result of international pressures brought about by Western imperialism. As already mentioned in the introduction, such a claim is by no means new; China scholars have long recognized the role of the West in the development of Chinese nationalism. Thus, it could be argued that this breaks little new ground. However, the author will seek to do so by grounding the story of China's incorporation into the modern international system, and the consequent development of Chinese nationalism, in IR theory – specifically, realist constructivism – and as such help to link China to broader patterns and processes of international politics. By doing so, it will be possible to demonstrate the validity of a third image approach to understanding nationalism and nationalist conflict.

In essence, the argument that will be made is that prior to its contact with Western civilization, China could be conceived of as being the center of a regional subsystem, the social structure of which was fundamentally different from the Western interstate system, and as such constituted China's identity in fundamentally different terms. Thus, the patterns of behavior so familiar to China scholars can be integrated into a broader theoretical framework of international politics. By doing so, we can gain a better understanding of the dynamics of systemic change in a non-Western context. More importantly, it

will give us a first-hand view of Hall's second sequence of transformational logic – namely, the impact that a change in the system's social structure had on China's identity. As will be demonstrated, it is this change in social structure, in conjunction with the military superiority of Western powers, that forced China to adopt a new identity as a nation-state.

The second question that must be addressed is – what interests and behavioral patterns are associated with this change in type identity? In other words, what new 'national' interests did China develop as a result of macro-structural change? Chapter 6 will seek to answer this question by examining the evolution of the Taiwan issue in Chinese foreign policy. If China's interest in Taiwan remains unchanged despite the dramatic changes in its identity, then nationalism might be seen as having little impact on Chinese foreign policy regarding this issue, except perhaps for the political instrumentality suggested by Zhao and others. However, if these interests have changed, then this must be the result either of changes in China's strategic environment (i.e., simple learning) or of changes in its identity (i.e., complex learning).

It will be argued that China's interests with respect to Taiwan have indeed changed dramatically, from having little, if any, interest in the island to treating it as vital to China's territorial and national integrity. This can, in part, be attributed to changes in China's security environment as external threats forced successive Chinese governments to seek greater integration of Taiwan with the mainland. However, in keeping with the perspective of realist constructivism discussed in Chapter 2, it will be argued that such threats simply influenced the direction of the learning process in which China was engaged, by forcing it to adopt Western conceptions of territorial and national sovereignty and not vice versa. Yet the specific outcome could have been different – e.g., China could have defined its new territorial interests in such a way that Taiwan would remain excluded. Indeed, the long, troubled path towards accepting Taiwan as an integral part of China demonstrates that strategic considerations alone do not explain China's newfound interest in the island. Such an explanation requires understanding how changes to China's identity led to a redefinition of China's interests.

Finally, the last question that must be addressed is, given China's new 'national' interests, to what extent is contemporary Chinese nationalism the product of an ideational security dilemma, and how likely is this to escalate into interstate conflict? In other words, can contemporary Chinese nationalism be conceived of as a reaction to conflicts between the role it seeks to enact and the counter-role that significant Others seek to impose? If it is indeed reactive, then there should be an identifiable Other (or Others) to which it is reacting, an associated role conflict that challenges Chinese identity, and evidence of an escalation in that conflict, at least to the point of significantly worsening relations. Whether such an escalation would lead to actual conflict with the Other is an open question. Chapter 7 will attempt to answer this question by examining the interaction between China and one of its most significant Others – the United States.

As the world's sole superpower, the United States is arguably the most significant Other for most states. In the case of China, that significance is enhanced by US support for Taiwan – which allows us to connect role with the previous discussion on the evolution of China's territorial interests – and the leadership it took in imposing sanctions on China after Tiananmen Square. While other states (e.g., Japan, Taiwan itself) are also important Others in China's foreign relations, the author will focus on the case of Sino-US relations in order to map the main contours of any potential role conflicts. The issue of how to deal with multiple role interactions will be left for future study. It will be argued that the US treatment of China as a failed modernizer after Tiananmen directly conflicted with China's evolving role as a great power. This role conflict helps to explain the escalation in Sino-US tensions throughout the 1990s that led to a confrontation over Taiwan in 1996. However, it will also be pointed out that this role conflict, while it made relations between the two states difficult, did not escalate to the point of violent conflict. While an ideational security dilemma may lead to a downward spiral in relations, whether it will lead to interstate conflict will depend on various other factors. Thus, nationalism may help set the stage for conflict, but it does not automatically result in it.

PART II: EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS

Chapter 5. FROM MIDDLE KINGDOM TO NATION-STATE: STRUCTURAL CHANGE & THE DEVELOPMENT OF CHINESE NATIONALISM

The theoretical framework discussed in Part I made three basic claims. First, nationalism is constituted by the international system and is therefore part of its social structure. Second, nationalism manifests itself macro-structurally as a particular type of state (a nation-state) with a specific ‘national’ identity and ‘national’ interests distinct from other state forms. Finally, nationalism manifests itself micro-structurally as a role taken on by the nation-state in reaction to threats to its identity. It is now necessary to examine the empirical evidence to determine whether or not it supports these claims. As previously discussed, China provides an excellent case for examining the potential impact of nationalism on foreign policy since Chinese foreign policy has often been (and continues to be) associated with nationalist goals and the development of Chinese nationalism itself is strongly connected with international politics. Therefore, Part II will examine Chinese nationalism and its impact on Chinese foreign policy in order to evaluate the theoretical claims made in Part I.

The first question that must be addressed is whether or not Chinese nationalism can be conceptualized as being constituted by the international system. This will determine the basic validity of the theoretical arguments being made. After all, if Chinese nationalism were derived solely from domestic sources, then the constructivist approach that has been outlined would be of little use. Therefore, this chapter will examine the historical roots of Chinese nationalism in order to demonstrate that its development was a direct response to structural changes brought about by Western imperialism and China’s forced absorption into the modern international system. The fact that Western imperialism played an important role in the development of Chinese nationalism has long been recognized by scholars of modern Chinese history. For instance, Jonathan Spence has stated that “for the Chinese [nationalism]

comprised a new, urgent awareness of their relationship to foreign forces and to the Manchus. It carried as well a corresponding sense of the Chinese people as a unit that must be mobilized for its own survival.”¹ Similarly, Torbjörn Lodén has stated that “China’s confrontation with the Western Powers and Japan in the nineteenth century made it necessary to relinquish the universalistic pretensions of the empire and to seek entrance into the family of nations, or the international system of states, as one sovereign state among others.”² The author’s position that Chinese nationalism was largely the product of international politics is therefore nothing new, particularly to China scholars. However, given the fact that the relationship between nationalism and the international system has traditionally been under-theorized, a reexamination of the Chinese case may help to flesh out the relationship and provide evidence for the initial proposition that the international system plays an integral role in the development of nationalism. In addition, this chapter will provide readers, particularly those less familiar with modern Chinese history, with the historical context necessary for understanding contemporary Chinese nationalism.

China as a Cultural-State: Early Chinese Identity & the East Asian Tribute System

In order to understand the structural effects of nationalism on China’s identity and interests, it is important to remember that the international system itself is relatively young. Prior to the era of Western exploration and colonization, and the technological innovations in transportation and communication that followed, the world was largely composed of relatively isolated regional systems – what George Modelski called “world regions”³ – separated by immense distances that severely limited contact between them. For centuries, China lay at the center of one such system that was heavily influenced by Confucian values. As such, while Rodney Hall’s conceptual framework for the evolution of the European interstate system (see Chapter 4) may yield important clues about the development of China’s modern identity as a

¹ Jonathan D. Spence, *The Search for Modern China* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1990), 23.

² Torbjörn Lodén, “Nationalism Transcending the State: Changing Conceptions of Chinese Identity,” in *Asian Forms of the Nation*, ed. Stein Tonnesson and Hans Antlöv (Richmond: Curzon Press Ltd., 1996), 277.

³ George Modelski, “Long Cycles of World Leadership,” in *Contending Approaches to World System Analysis*, ed. William R. Thompson (Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1983), 116.

nation-state, China's developmental path more closely resembles his second sequence of transformational logic. In other words, China was an object of systemic transformation, not an agent of it. It is therefore necessary to examine the regional system of which China was a part, which I will refer to as the Confucian system (in contrast to the Augsburg or Westphalian systems), as well as the international norms, institutions, legitimating principles, and collective identity that produced it.

Although the Confucian system was highly dynamic, the basic ideas on which it was based endured for many centuries. In fact, Adda Bozeman has suggested that the basic Chinese world-view existed well before it was formally laid out by Confucius and later Chinese scholars. This world-view "assumed a natural harmony between heavenly and earthly forces, and invited men to think of the entire universe as a peaceful world-embracing community, which Heaven governs in such a way that all human destinies can express themselves in ordered relationships on all levels of association, be it in the family, in the state, or in greater spheres."⁴ These ideas were developed more explicitly by numerous Chinese scholars, and particularly by Confucius (551-479 B.C.), whose ideas eventually became the core legitimating principles of the Chinese state during the Western Han dynasty (206 B.C. – 9 AD). Although summarizing the content of Confucian philosophy in just a few sentences risks gross oversimplification, it is necessary in order to understand the ideational foundations of the Confucian system.

In essence, Confucianism was primarily concerned with the creation of social harmony. This could only be achieved through human virtue, and thus Confucius "advocated a good government that rules by virtue and moral example rather than by punishment or force."⁵ A ruler was therefore expected to demonstrate the highest possible virtue so that the people would follow his example. Such virtue was demonstrated through *li* – "those 'objective' prescriptions of behavior, whether involving rite, ceremony, manners, or general deportment, that bind human beings and the spirits together in networks of interacting

⁴ Adda B. Bozeman, *Politics & Culture in International History: From the Ancient Near East to the Opening of the Modern Age*, 2d ed. (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1994), 134.

⁵ Wing-tsit Chan, *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963), 15.

roles within the family, within human society, and with the numinous realm beyond.”⁶ In other words, social harmony could only exist if everyone in society understood their role and acted accordingly. This is best represented by the ‘five relationships,’ each of which is associated with a particular virtue.

Table 1 - The Five Relationships of Confucianism⁷

Five Key Relationships	Appropriate Values
Father-Son	Filial Piety
Ruler-Subject	Loyalty
Brother-Brother	Brotherliness
Husband-Wife	Love and Obedience
Friend-Friend	Faithfulness

Although these relationships involved reciprocal obligations, the Confucian view of social harmony was essentially hierarchical. For instance, while a ruler had an obligation to care for his subjects and provide a proper moral example, subjects had an obligation to obey the ruler.

Confucian beliefs in a moral and harmonious social order underpinned by proper behavior within a given social hierarchy provided the legitimating principles for China’s political institutions. At the apex of the political system was the emperor, who as the Son of Heaven (*tianzi* [*t’ien-tse*])⁸ was considered to have the greatest virtue and thus the right to rule – the Mandate of Heaven (*tianming* [*t’ien-ming*]). This mandate was exercised, not just through administration of the empire, but also through the proper conduct of various rites and ceremonies meant to ensure prosperity for the people. Events such as droughts, floods, and other natural disasters, as well as widespread social unrest or invasion, were considered signs that the emperor had lost his mandate, bringing about the decline and eventual collapse of one dynasty and the rise of another. In order to aid in the administration of the empire, an advanced system of bureaucracy was developed. Its officials were required to pass a rigorous, highly standardized series of civil service exams based on the Confucian classics, for which study began in early childhood. The exam

⁶ Benjamin I. Schwartz, *The World of Thought in Ancient China* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1985), 67.

⁷ Charles O. Hucker, *China’s Imperial Past: An Introduction to Chinese History and Culture* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1975).

⁸ Over the years, the predominant method for transliterating Chinese characters into Western alphabets has changed. The author uses the more modern method – *pinyin* – whenever possible. However, alternative transliterations using the older Wade-Giles system are also provided since this was once very common.

system was designed to produce generalists, scholar-bureaucrats, who could apply the moral teachings of Confucius and later scholars to everyday matters.

Confucian ideas had a tremendous impact on China's relations with its neighbors, and thus provided the normative structure of the Confucian system. They were seen as the measure of civilization and as universal principles to which all people should subscribe. Societies that failed to adhere to Confucian beliefs were considered barbarians and inherently inferior. It should be emphasized that this "superiority over the barbarians had a cultural rather than a mere political basis; it rested less upon force than upon the Chinese way of life embodied in such things as the Confucian code of conduct and the use of the Chinese written language; the sign of the barbarian was not race or origin so much as non-adherence to this way of life."⁹ As such, barbarians could become civilized by accepting the superiority of Chinese ways, a concept referred to as *laihua* – 'come and be transformed.' This included acceptance of the authority of the Chinese emperor, who was not simply the ruler of the Chinese people, but the ruler of *tianxia* (*t'ien-hsia*) – 'All under Heaven.' Confucian beliefs thus "permitted the Chinese to conceptualize the international order in terms of value systems as well as systems of power."¹⁰

This conceptualization was institutionalized in a complex set of relations generally known as the tribute system. Of course, as Mark Mancall points out, "it must be constantly borne in mind that the concept of the tribute system is a Western invention for descriptive purposes. The Confucian scholar-bureaucrat did not conceive of a tribute system...as an institutional complex complete within itself or distinct from the other institutions of Confucian society."¹¹ Instead, Mancall suggests that "in one sense the tribute system was simply the recognizable, stable recurrence of discrete social phenomena that shared certain characteristics."¹² At its core was the expectation that China's barbarian neighbors should pay tribute to the Chinese emperor in recognition of his superior virtue and position as the Son of Heaven. It was through this position that "the emperor connected human society to the rest of the cosmos. Entry into

⁹ John K. Fairbank, and Ssu-yü Têng, *Ch'ing Administration: Three Studies* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1960), 137-38.

¹⁰ Mark Mancall, *China at the Center: 300 Years of Foreign Policy* (New York: The Free Press, 1984), 7.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 13.

¹² *Ibid.*, 15.

the emperor's presence or court required recognition of these principles through the correct performance of the rituals and through tribute presentation."¹³ Thus, tribute represented more than an exchange of material goods brought about by an uneven distribution of power; it was part and parcel of the rituals and ceremonies that guaranteed universal harmony.

The idea that other states should pay tribute to the Chinese emperor was not mere wishful thinking on the part of Confucian intellectuals. Between 1662 and 1911, for instance, over 500 tribute missions from sixty-two different countries arrived in the Chinese capital to perform the various rites and ceremonies associated with the recognition of the Son of Heaven's authority over all mankind.¹⁴ While some states (e.g., Japan) were infrequent participants, others (e.g., Korea, Vietnam) sent tribute on a fairly regular basis. In most cases, China did not actively seek out new tributaries; only occasionally were conscious efforts made to expand the system beyond China's more immediate neighbors (e.g., the voyages of the Ming treasure fleet).¹⁵ Instead, Guoqi Xu suggests that "close-mindedness and self-imposed isolation might be called the main characteristics of *tianxia*."¹⁶ The tribute system existed to regulate China's relations with other societies, not as a means of actively spreading Chinese hegemony.

However, while the tribute system provides a useful way of conceptualizing China's early foreign relations, it is important not to accept it at face value. Doing so risks severely oversimplifying what was an inherently complex system of international relations. As such, it is necessary to offer a few qualifications. First, the Confucian ideas that provided the foundation for the tribute system did not produce just one Chinese approach to foreign policy. On the one hand, the Sinocentric world-view associated with the tribute system often produced an essentially introverted foreign policy, in which China was uninterested in anything foreign and sought to insulate itself from outside influences. The

¹³ Ibid., 22.

¹⁴ Ibid., 15. For an extensive listing of tribute missions during the Ming and Qing dynasties, see Fairbank and Têng, *Ch'ing Administration*.

¹⁵ For discussions of the Ming treasure fleet, see Louise Levathes, *When China Ruled the Seas: The Treasure Fleet of the Dragon Throne, 1405-33* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994); Philip Snow, *The Star Raft: China's Encounter with Africa* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988); and Gavin Menzies, *1421: The Year China Discovered America* (New York: William Morrow, 2003).

¹⁶ Guoqi Xu, "Nationalism, Internationalism, and National Identity: China from 1895 to 1919," in *Chinese Nationalism in Perspective: Historical and Recent Cases*, ed. C. X. George Wei and Xiaoyuan Liu (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2001), 102.

abrupt ending of China's own voyages of exploration is perhaps the perfect example. On the other hand, Michael Hunt argues that during some historical periods Chinese foreign policy has been far more cosmopolitan in its outlook, actively trading with other societies and importing ideas (e.g., Buddhism).¹⁷ Similarly, Joanna Waley-Cohen argues that China's historical tendency towards isolationism is greatly exaggerated.¹⁸ It would therefore be a mistake to treat the tribute system as a simplistic expression of Confucian ideology.

Second, while it will be argued that the incompatibility of the Confucian and Western systems of international relations would eventually bring about the demise of the former, the tribute system was not as static and inflexible as is often suggested. The tribute system itself did not exist in a single form throughout China's imperial history; it evolved over time.¹⁹ The system as it is most commonly described was developed during the Ming and Qing (Ch'ing) dynasties (1368-1644 and 1644-1911, respectively), with a number of significant innovations made during the Qing.²⁰ It also allowed room for at least some limited compromise. For instance, when the Qing came into contact with the expanding Russian empire, the two eventually signed two important agreements – the Treaty of Nerchinsk (1689) and the Treaty of Kyakhta (1728) – that “represented a compromise between the positions assumed by Moscow and Peking.”²¹ Many of their provisions, particularly the careful delineation of a frontier between them, were “something of a departure from traditional Chinese practice.”²² In part this was due to a pragmatic need to consolidate the Qing position vis-à-vis Central Asia. However, Mancall suggests that such compromise was made possible by the fact that these treaties “established a culturally neutral system of institutions that allowed for interpretation of the acts of intercourse in accord with the political,

¹⁷ Michael H. Hunt, *The Genesis of Chinese Communist Foreign Policy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 5.

¹⁸ Joanna Waley-Cohen, *The Sextants of Beijing: Global Currents in Chinese History* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1999).

¹⁹ King C. Chen, “Traditional Chinese Foreign Relations: Introduction,” in *The Foreign Policy of China*, ed. King C. Chen (Roseland: East-West Who? Inc., Publishers, 1972), 8-9.

²⁰ Mancall, *China at the Center*, 16-20.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 76.

²² *Ibid.*, 77.

ideological, and ritual requirements and perceptions of each side.”²³ In essence, both sides remained “free to perpetuate its own perceptions of the other and the international scene.”²⁴ Thus, the Chinese were often quite flexible in their application of Confucian principles, so long as the principles themselves remained intact.

Third, the operation of the tribute system was interspersed with periods in which China’s relations with its neighbors more closely resembled the European system of relatively equal states.²⁵ This can be associated with the more or less cyclical rise and fall of Chinese dynasties that has given Chinese history its periodicity. As Mancall puts it, “periods of unity, dominated by the imperial state, alternated with periods of disunity, characterized by the reemergence of a polycentric multistate system.”²⁶ Dynastic decline brought with it a significant reduction in the extent of Chinese power, often leading to invasions and internal collapse. Although the basic institutions of the imperial system, and the power associated with it, were generally reconstituted in the form of a new dynasty, the periods between dynasties often necessitated important changes in the style and substance of China’s international affairs.

For instance, during the relatively chaotic period known as the Five Dynasties and the Ten Kingdoms (907-960) that followed the collapse of the T’ang dynasty (618-907), “a political vacuum existed in East Asia that permitted the various domestic and foreign states to deal with each other more or less as diplomatic equals.”²⁷ The traditional order provided by the tribute system broke down as Chinese and non-Chinese states competed with each other for authority, producing a system of constant competition and shifting alliances. Even after the reestablishment of central authority under the Sung dynasty (960-1279), China was weak enough relative to many of its neighbors, particularly the Liao in the north, that its foreign relations had to be significantly altered. In fact, Wang Gungwu has suggested that

²³ Ibid., 79.

²⁴ Ibid., 79.

²⁵ *China Among Equals: The Middle Kingdom and Its Neighbors, 10th-14th Centuries*. Edited by Morris Rossabi. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983).

²⁶ Mancall, *China at the Center*, 4-5.

²⁷ Edmund H. Worthy, Jr., “Diplomacy for Survival: Domestic and Foreign Relations of Wu Yüeh, 907-978,” in *China among Equals: The Middle Kingdom and Its Neighbors, 10th – 14th Centuries*, ed. Morris Rossabi (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 19.

“Liao’s relations with the Sung were the nearest thing to equality in Chinese history until modern times.”²⁸ The rough parity between them prevented the Sung from treating the Liao as an inferior needing to present tribute. Moreover, it resulted in other states, such as Vietnam and Korea, being less bound to their traditional vassal relationships with China. “Thus,” concludes Wang, “the de facto situation around Sung China soon after 1005 was one of several states that did not ‘submit’ to Sung authority but allowed the rhetoric of tribute to be used until they were ready to reject it.”²⁹

Finally, it is important to consider the reasons for why (aside from ideology) the tribute system was established in the first place, and why other societies were often willing to play by its rules. For China, it served an important function in self-defense. Barbarian raids aimed at acquiring Chinese goods were relatively common, particularly when environmental conditions (e.g., drought) made nomadic life difficult.³⁰ The tribute system provided a mechanism to control such raids by regulating China’s relations with these groups. It could accomplish this because, as mentioned earlier, the relationship between ruler and ruled (or civilization and barbarism) in Confucian thought was not a one-way street; it involved reciprocal obligations. While barbarians were required to present tribute in recognition of the emperor’s position at the apex of world order, the emperor bestowed gifts on his tribute-bearing subjects to demonstrate “his benevolence, compassion, and generosity [which] would serve as a model for foreign rulers and would draw them and their people closer to China.”³¹ Indeed, Mancall suggests that “the symbolic meaning of the tribute was further extended by the fact that the emperor’s gifts were usually more valuable than the tribute he received, indicating that the emperor, as the apex of the entire system, could not be outdone in generosity and reinforcing, through the obvious exhibition of abundance and

²⁸ Wang Gungwu, “The Rhetoric of a Lesser Empire: Early Sung Relations with Its Neighbors,” in *China among Equals: The Middle Kingdom and Its Neighbors, 10th – 14th Centuries*, ed. Morris Rossabi (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 55.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 62.

³⁰ Morris Rossabi, “Introduction,” in *China among Equals: The Middle Kingdom and Its Neighbors, 10th – 14th Centuries*, ed. Morris Rossabi (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 1-3. For an extensive discussion of the relationship between trade and conflict in China’s relations with nomadic groups, see Sechin Jagchid, and Van Jay Symons, *Peace, War, and Trade Along the Great Wall: Nomadic-Chinese Interaction through Two Millennia* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989).

³¹ Rossabi, “Introduction,” 2.

wealth..., his apexical role.”³² The tribute system was thus intended to encourage barbarians to accept Chinese culture.

On the other hand, since Confucianism denigrated trade and profit seeking, in many ways “tribute was a cloak for trade.”³³ It was this prospect of trade that provided enormous material incentives for other states to participate in the system. This was particularly true of the more nomadic groups of central Asia. As Thomas Barfield points out, these groups “not only rejected Chinese culture and ideology, worse, they obstinately refused to see any value in it except in terms of the material goods the Chinese could offer.”³⁴ Their participation in the tribute system was thus purely based on a calculation of interests, a consideration that, despite Confucian ideology, did not escape the Chinese either. Sechin Jagchid and Van Jay Symons argue that “nomads carefully and continually gauged whether existing frontier markets, tributary exchange, or intermarriage arrangements were more advantageous to them than raiding China. In turn, Chinese dynasts constantly weighed the costs of maintaining these exchange mechanisms against the expense of warring with nomads.”³⁵ From this perspective, the tribute system could be interpreted as an ideological front for material interests, one which Barfield suggests was readily manipulated by nomadic tribes for their own ends.³⁶

Yet these qualifications should not detract from the overall importance of the tribute system as a normative structure of international relations in East Asia, just as the frequent failure to abide by the principles of state sovereignty do not negate its importance as a defining characteristic of the European interstate system. While China itself was sometimes too weak or fragmented to exercise influence through the tribute system, the ideas to which it gave rise provided a fundamental norm of international conduct that served as the foundation of the East Asian system’s social structure. The concept of tribute was utilized by various states in the region in their relations with each other, not just with China. “Korea,

³² Mancall, *China at the Center*, 37.

³³ Fairbank and Têng, *Ch’ing Administration*, 111.

³⁴ Thomas J. Barfield, *The Perilous Frontier: Nomadic Empires and China, 221 BC to AD 1757* (Cambridge: Blackwell Publishers, 1992), 2.

³⁵ Jagchid and Symons, *Peace, War, and Trade Along the Great Wall*, 1.

³⁶ Barfield, *The Perilous Frontier*, 3.

for instance, often conducted its relations with Japan on a tribute pattern. Ladakh presented tribute to Tibet, and Cambodia might present tribute to a stronger Thailand. The Nguyen rulers of Vietnam might call themselves ‘emperors’ at home, but, in communications with China, they called themselves ‘kings,’ a clear example of the extension of hierarchy.”³⁷ In essence, Mancall suggests that, “viewed vertically, the Peking-centered tribute system was itself only the uppermost and most solemn part of a vast system of hierarchical relationships that seemed to embrace the entire intergroup and even interpersonal life of East Asia.”³⁸ The tribute system was not simply China’s way of ordering its relations with other, sometimes threatening, societies. It was the crux of an East Asian system of international relations that differed significantly in its normative structure from the European world of sovereign states.

Of course, returning to the perspective of realist constructivism discussed in Chapter 2, such an ideational structure would probably have been unsustainable if the relative power of China and its neighbors had not been so lopsided for so long. While international systems may be socially constructed based on shared knowledge, social structures that deviate significantly from material bases of power are likely to eventually be overwhelmed. In the end, whose norms prevail will depend to a large extent on the balance of material capabilities. This helps to explain why China’s pretensions to universal authority were largely more successful than, say, the Holy Roman Empire’s. As Henry Kissinger has speculated, “had the Holy Roman Emperor ever succeeded in establishing central control over the territories technically under his jurisdiction, the relations of Western European states to it might have been similar to those of China’s neighbors to the Middle Kingdom, with France comparable to Vietnam or Korea, and Great Britain to Japan.”³⁹ Similarly, if the periodic breakdown in centralized Chinese authority had been longer lasting, then the traditional idea of tribute and hierarchy might have been replaced by something resembling the Western notion of state sovereignty as competing powers sought to assert their own, independent authority.

³⁷ Mark Mancall, “The Persistence of Tradition in Chinese Foreign Policy,” in *The Foreign Policy of China*, ed. King C. Chen (Roseland: East-West Who? Inc., Publishers, 1972), 32.

³⁸ Mancall, *China at the Center*, 33-4.

³⁹ Henry Kissinger, *Diplomacy* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994), 56-7.

Power relations aside, however, one should not underestimate the ability of Confucian norms to shape state relations even during periods of dynastic decline. Although Edmund Worthy suggests that “the Sinocentric structure of foreign relations lost much of its compelling logic”⁴⁰ during such periods, the ideational basis of it remained. As a result, dynastic decline and disunity in China did not cause the breakdown of the Confucian system so much as spark a competition for who would lay claim to a new Mandate of Heaven. For instance, during the Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms period, Rossabi points out that “there were...numerous rulers who claimed to be the Son of Heaven....Each pursued his own interest with little concern for loyalty to anyone else’s Mandate of Heaven.”⁴¹ While he and others point to this as an example of the breakdown of the system, it is important to recognize that lack of loyalty to someone else’s Mandate of Heaven is very different from disavowal of the idea of a mandate itself, let alone the recognition of state sovereignty. Rossabi may be correct that “such continual shifts in loyalty diminished the prestige of the imperial institution.”⁴² However, the normative foundation of the institution remained. Even groups that did not fully accept Confucian ideas often utilized its institutions, particularly when they were powerful enough to take the reigns of central power themselves and establish a ‘foreign’ dynasty (e.g., the Qing). The fact that such dynasties had a direct interest in maintaining Confucian norms upon assuming the Mandate of Heaven does not detract from their importance. As discussed in Chapter 2, social structures are only maintained through social practice.

What is essential to recognize is that this hierarchical system was not simply a system of unequal states with China as regional hegemon. It was a system in which the inequality of states was ideologically sanctioned in such a way that the state as an actor was barely recognized. The *tianxia* over which the emperor ruled “entailed a single, stratified, total order based on principles of differentiation (involving ritual and decorum) at the basis of the transcendent authority of heaven....There was no world

⁴⁰ Worthy, Jr., “Diplomacy for Survival,” 18.

⁴¹ Rossabi, “Introduction,” 5.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 6.

outside of the *tianxia*, for it was itself a single, complete ‘world’ system.”⁴³ As such, it is commonly suggested that in the Confucian worldview “international society was the extension of internal society.”⁴⁴ Thus, it could not recognize the existence of particularistic states, nor even recognize ‘China’ as a political entity per se. Indeed, “there was not even a serviceable Chinese word for the historical and ethical community of ‘China’ before the nineteenth century.”⁴⁵ As Xu points out, “the *tianxia* system not only refused to acknowledge the world of formally equal states, but more importantly, it disregarded Chinese national sovereignty.”⁴⁶ Similarly, Mancall suggests that “the Chinese state was not a state in the conventional Western mold; rather, it was the administration of civilized society *in toto*, and the emperor, far from being the ruler of one state among many, was the mediator between heaven and earth, a cardinal point in the universal continuum, the apex of civilization, unique in the universe.”⁴⁷ In essence, without even the most basic recognition of separate polities, there could be no concept of state and no ‘international’ relations as such, only relations between the emperor and his subjects, between civilization and barbarism.

Such a position is perhaps somewhat of an exaggeration. In its dealings with other societies, China certainly understood that other governments existed with the power to rule over their respective subjects and over which China had no direct control. These polities were termed *guo* (*kuo*), which is generally translated as ‘state.’ However, Mancall and others are correct to point out that since such entities had no legitimate standing in Confucian thought, *guo* should not be equated with the Western concept of the *sovereign* state. As Joseph Levenson noted, Confucianism was careful to distinguish between *tianxia* and *guo* – “the latter connotes not only land and people but protection by military force. But *t’ien-hsia* is a conception of civilized society; it means far more than just a political unit held by *de*

⁴³ Murata Yūjirō, “Dynasty, State, and Society: The Case of Modern China,” in *Imagining the People: Chinese Intellectuals and the Concept of Citizenship, 1890-1920*, ed. Joshua A. Fogel and Peter G. Zarrow (Armonk: M. E. Sharpe, Inc., 1997), 117.

⁴⁴ Mancall, “The Persistence of Tradition in Chinese Foreign Policy,” 31.

⁴⁵ Suisheng Zhao, *A Nation-State by Construction: Dynamics of Modern Chinese Nationalism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), 44-5.

⁴⁶ Xu, “Nationalism, Internationalism, and National Identity,” 102.

⁴⁷ Mancall, *China at the Center*, 22.

facto power.”⁴⁸ Barbarian societies might be able to attain *guo*, but they could never hope to attain *tianxia* without achieving the highest level of civilization (i.e., accepting Chinese culture). In this way, Confucianism did recognize the existence of corporate actors, outside of direct Chinese control, that might be termed states. In this sense, China too was a *guo* – *zhongguo*, the Middle Kingdom, the center of *tianxia*. Yet it was *tianxia*, not *guo*, that was the defining principle of the Confucian system, and of China’s identity.

How then should one define China’s collective identity as a political actor? Given the central role of the emperor as an object of political loyalty, and the fact that the term would fit well with the periodization of Chinese imperial history, one might be tempted to employ the term ‘dynastic-state’ to it. However, this would risk confusing it with the European dynastic-state discussed in the last chapter whose source of legitimacy was very different from that of the Confucian Middle Kingdom. Instead, China might best be described as a ‘cultural-state’ in which the object of supreme loyalty was not the *guo* per se, but *tianxia* as an expression of Chinese culture. While this certainly involved the political institutions of the Chinese *guo*, it was *tianxia* that defined China’s collective identity, and that came into conflict with the interstate system of the West.

A Clash of Civilizations: System Change & the Breakdown of the Confucian World Order

As with any set of international norms, the Confucian system’s continuation depended on active practice on the part of both sides. As Mancall suggests, “when discontinuities threatened the system it was often because China’s partner in the relationship could not accept, ideologically or institutionally, necessary elements of the system itself.”⁴⁹ While such discontinuities were not unknown in other periods of history, they became overwhelming when the Western powers, whose norms of international conduct differed significantly from those of the Chinese, began to interact more with China and its vassals. During the early years of Sino-Western interaction, these differences produced numerous instances of

⁴⁸ Joseph R. Levenson, *The Problem of Intellectual Continuity*, vol. 1 of *Confucian China and Its Modern Fate: A Trilogy*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972), 101.

⁴⁹ Mancall, *China at the Center*, 24.

misunderstanding and distrust. For instance, Mancall notes that in East Asian diplomatic practice, “an ambassador’s credentials and the letters he carried from his master were valued more highly, and treated with greater reverence, than the person of the ambassador.”⁵⁰ This often produced Western complaints over the treatment of diplomatic representatives and was sometimes seen as a deliberate insult to the ruler being represented. In addition, unwillingness on the part of some Western powers, particularly Britain, to perform important rituals (e.g., kowtowing before the emperor) created bad feelings and often resulted in breakdowns in diplomatic exchange. It was this fundamental incompatibility between Western and Chinese norms of international behavior – i.e., a lack of shared knowledge – that, when combined with Western technological superiority and the West’s willingness to exert influence through military force, resulted in the collapse of the Confucian order of international relations and provided the seeds for Chinese nationalism as China was forced to redefine itself in Western terms.

The Confucian System in Crisis: Western Imperialism & the Collapse of the Tribute System

As already discussed, one of the main functions of the tribute system was to provide a framework for trade within the confines of Confucian ideology. While overland trade with various nomadic groups in central Asia had long been the primary impetus for this, the tribute system also served to control maritime trade with Southeast Asian and Arab traders. “By the thirteenth century the main features of this system were well established: the supervision and taxation of trade by officials responsible directly to the capital, the confinement of trade to certain ports..., the confinement of foreigners at these ports...to their own quarters, where they were under the authority of one of their own number.”⁵¹ This system was further adapted to deal with increased contact with Western traders in the 16th and 17th centuries. What became known as the Canton system was instituted in 1685, restricting foreign trade to four ports – Guangzhou (Canton), Zhangzhou (Chang-chou), Ningbo (Ningpo), and Yantai shan (Yün-t’ai-shan). Although the latter three were under the authority of provincial officials, Guangzhou, where the bulk of

⁵⁰ Ibid., 23.

⁵¹ John King Fairbank, *Trade and Diplomacy on the China Coast: The Opening of the Treaty Ports 1842-1854*, Two Volumes in One. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1969), 46.

foreign trade was conducted, remained under central control through the Superintendent of Maritime Customs (often referred to as the Hoppo).⁵²

Trade in the Canton system was conducted monopolistically, after 1720 by a Chinese merchant guild called the Cohong. The *hong* merchants served as intermediaries between the Chinese officials and the Western traders, who were not permitted to have direct contact with the government. The high costs and rampant corruption associated with trade in Guangzhou briefly forced the British East India Company, the predominant foreign trading concern in China, to relocate its operations north to Ningbo (near Shanghai). However, complaints from officials in Guangzhou over their loss of trade, as well as government concerns over the spread of Western influence, resulted in a sharp increase in customs duties in Ningbo aimed at discouraging further Western attention and the eventual restriction of foreign trade to Guangzhou in 1759.⁵³

While local officials and the imperial court benefited enormously from the trade, Fairbank points out that its “fiscal importance...seems never to have been acknowledged in the official ideology of the Manchu dynasty.”⁵⁴ Indeed far from actively encouraging foreign trade, the Chinese government placed numerous restrictions on it and the conduct of the traders in order to limit their contact with Chinese society as much as possible.⁵⁵ These restrictions, as well as disputes over legal jurisdictions for criminal cases involving foreigners, produced a great deal of discontent on the part of the trading companies. As a result, the British government decided to pursue the establishment of more direct diplomatic links with the imperial court, as well as a more favorable trading arrangement. The position of ‘Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary from the King of Great Britain to the Emperor of China’ was given to Lord Macartney on May 3, 1792, and his mission set sail on September 26. Macartney was tasked with the following objectives:

⁵² Ibid., 47-9; Immanuel C. Y. Hsü, *The Rise of Modern China*, 2d ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975), 189-90.

⁵³ Fairbank, *Trade and Diplomacy on the China Coast*, 50-1; Hsü, *The Rise of Modern China*, 190-92.

⁵⁴ Fairbank, *Trade and Diplomacy on the China Coast*, 52.

⁵⁵ For a list of restrictions, see Hsü, *The Rise of Modern China*, 201-02.

1. To acquire one or two places near the tea- and silk-producing and the woolen-consuming areas, where British traders might reside and English jurisdiction be exercised.
2. To negotiate a commercial treaty with a view to extending trade throughout China if possible.
3. To relieve existing abuses at Canton.
4. To create a desire in China for British products.
5. To arrange diplomatic representation at Peking [Beijing].
6. To open Japan, Cochin China, and the Eastern Islands to British commerce.⁵⁶

The British mission arrived in Guangzhou on June 19, 1793 and proceeded to sail north to the port of Dagu (Taku), near Tianjin, where it disembarked for its trip to the capital and on to the emperor Qianlong's (Ch'ien-lung) summer residence in Jehol (in Manchuria).

The Chinese treated the British mission as they would any other tribute mission sent by a barbarian king to recognize the superior virtue of the emperor, although the mission was generally afforded greater hospitality given that this was their first official presentation of tribute. For the most part, Macartney played the role, bringing with him 600 cases of presents for the emperor and allowing a flag reading "Tributary Envoy from England" to be flown from the boat he traveled on from Tianjin to Beijing. However, during his audience with the emperor on September 14, Macartney refused to perform the kowtow and instead knelt on one knee as he would before the English king, a fact that annoyed the court but did not produce an immediate breakdown in the mission. Despite the elaborate ceremonies, banquets, and exchanges of gifts that took place, Macartney failed to gain any agreement from the Chinese court regarding his requests. Indeed, he was unable to discuss the matter with the emperor directly and had to be satisfied with presenting a written request through a third party. He left Beijing on October 7 and returned to Guangzhou, and then from Macao set sail for home on March 8, 1794 without having achieved any of the British goals.⁵⁷

The failure of the Macartney mission, as has so often been stated, was the direct result of the incompatibility of the Western and Confucian systems of international relations. The extension of trade and the establishment of a permanent diplomatic mission in the capital were completely contrary to

⁵⁶ Hsü, *The Rise of Modern China*, 207.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 208-12.

Confucian diplomatic practice. This is perhaps best illustrated by the oft-cited message Qianlong sent to King George III:

It may be, O King, that the above proposals have been wantonly made by your ambassador on his own responsibility; or peradventure you yourself are ignorant of our dynastic regulations and had no intention of transgressing them when you expressed these wild ideas and hopes...Above all, upon you, who live in a remote and inaccessible region, far across the spaces of ocean, but who have shown your submissive loyalty by sending this tribute mission, I have heaped benefits far in excess of those I have accorded to other nations. But the demands presented by your embassy are not only a contravention of dynastic tradition, but would be unproductive of good results to yourself, besides being quite impracticable...It is your bounden duty reverently to appreciate my feelings and to obey these instructions henceforth for all times, so that you may enjoy the blessings of perpetual peace.⁵⁸

A second British mission sent in 1816 and headed by Lord Amherst was even less successful, being unable to even obtain an imperial audience for refusal to perform the kowtow. This led to consideration of military action on the part of the British, and of ending the Canton trade altogether on the part of the Chinese.

The breakdown in relations between Britain and China was exacerbated by the changing nature of the Canton trade. By 1820, private traders had surpassed company traders as the predominant players, with opium becoming the main commodity being (illegally) traded. Opium had been introduced to China centuries before, but only came into recreational use in the 17th century. It had become a large enough problem by 1729 that the Emperor Yongzheng (Yung-cheng) banned its sale; its importation and cultivation were banned by the Emperor Jiaqing (Chia-ch'ing) in 1796. As Figure 5.1 shows,⁵⁹ the opium trade

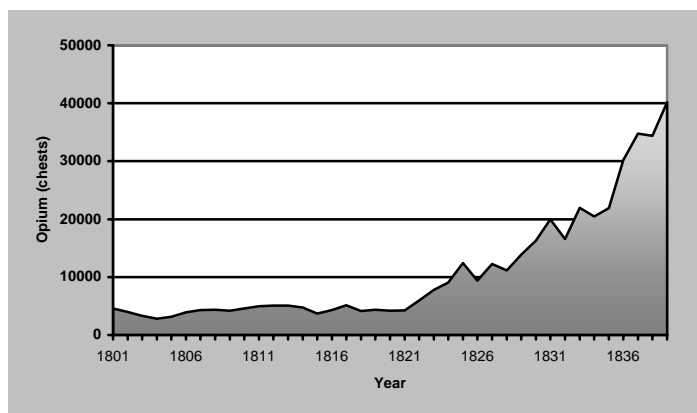


Figure 5.1 – Opium Shipments to China (1801-39)

remained steady throughout the first two decades of the 19th century despite the ban, and began to

⁵⁸ Cited in Hsü, *The Rise of Modern China*, 213.

⁵⁹ Hosea Ballou Morse, *The Period of Conflict 1834-1860*, vol. 1 of *The International Relations of the Chinese Empire* (London: Longman, Green, and Company, 1910), 209-10.

increase dramatically in the 1820s. In addition to the obvious social problems (e.g., drug addiction) that this produced, the opium trade also caused severe economic distress. Given its illicit nature, payment for the drug was in hard currency (silver). The increase in the opium trade therefore caused a large outflow of silver from China, upsetting the local economy.⁶⁰ Between 1828 and 1833, China saw a net loss of \$13.8 million. By the late-1830s, the annual outflow of silver had almost doubled.⁶¹ For Western traders, particularly the British, who had been unable to establish a positive balance of trade for lack of Chinese demand for Western goods, the opium trade proved to be an “economic panacea.”⁶²

Although some Chinese officials advocated legalization as a way of bringing the opium trade under control, the government instead responded by targeting it more aggressively. On December 31, 1838, Lin Zexu (Lin Tse-hsü) was appointed imperial commissioner and charged with the task of suppressing the opium trade. Upon his arrival in Guangzhou in the spring of 1839, Lin initiated a crackdown that included the stoppage of trade and a siege of the British factory in Guangzhou aimed at forcing the traders to hand over their supplies of opium and sign an agreement to end their involvement in the opium trade. The British superintendent of trade, Charles Elliot, who was present in the factory during the siege, responded by ordering all opium under British control to be turned over to him; he in turn handed it over to Lin for destruction. Elliot’s compliance was not out of sympathy for the Chinese position, but to make China responsible to the British government for the economic loss of the opium. He refused to accept Lin’s demand for a signed agreement to halt the opium trade and requested military support to protect British trade interests against further Chinese actions. On November 3, 1839, a naval skirmish resulted in the destruction of four Chinese ships with several others sustaining heavy damage. On January 31, 1840, a formal declaration of war was issued on behalf of the British government, marking the official start of the first Opium War (1840-42).⁶³

⁶⁰ It has been argued that the negative impact of the opium trade on China’s economy may have been more imagined than real; see Fairbank, *Trade and Diplomacy on the China Coast*, 76.

⁶¹ Hsü, *The Rise of Modern China*, 224.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 225.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 230-37. For discussions of the Opium War, see Jack Beeching, *The Chinese Opium Wars* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1975); and Peter Ward Fay, *The Opium War 1840-1842: Barbarians in the Celestial*

In addition to the more immediate issues of compensation for the lost opium and the illegal detention (from Britain's perspective) of British officials, the Opium War provided an opportunity for Britain to achieve what had eluded it since the failure of the Macartney mission almost 50 years earlier – the further opening of China to British trade and the establishment of more normal diplomatic relations, on accepted Western terms, with the Middle Kingdom. In fact, Suisheng Zhao argues that “to a great extent, the Opium War was a conflict between the expansive modern West and a traditional China. From this perspective, the problem of opium was secondary to the struggle between the Chinese empire and Western nation-states.”⁶⁴ Britain's military victory over China helped to accomplish what years of diplomacy could not. The Treaty of Nanjing, signed on August 29, 1842, included the following provisions:

1. An indemnity of \$21 million: \$12 million for military expenses, \$6 million for the destroyed opium, and \$3 million for the repayment of the hong merchants' debts to British traders.
2. Abolition of the Co-hong monopolistic system of trade.
3. Opening of five ports to trade and residence of British consuls and merchants and their families: Canton, Amoy [Xiamen], Foochow [Fuzhou], Ningpo, and Shanghai.
4. Cession of Hong Kong....
5. Equality in official correspondence.
6. A fixed tariff, to be established shortly afterwards.⁶⁵

The treaty thus included much of what the British had wanted from the Chinese in terms of both trade and diplomatic protocol. The Treaty of the Bogue, signed on October 18, 1843 to supplement the original treaty, accomplished even more by not only giving the British the right to anchor warships in the treaty ports, but also establishing the principles of extraterritoriality and most-favored-nation status.

The irony of the treaties ending the Opium War was thus that while the war had been conducted in part to force the Chinese to deal with Britain as a diplomatic equal, as dictated by the Western principle of state sovereignty, the principles they included simply reversed the situation by locking China into a position of diplomatic inferiority through what became known as the unequal treaty system. Extraterritoriality gave the Western powers legal jurisdiction over their own citizens operating on Chinese

Empire in the Early Part of the Nineteenth Century and the War by Which They Forced Her Gates Ajar (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1997).

⁶⁴ Zhao, *A Nation-State by Construction*, 17.

⁶⁵ Hsü, *The Rise of Modern China*, 243.

soil, while the most-favored nation clause stated: “Should the Emperor hereafter, from any cause whatever, be pleased to grant additional privileges or immunities to any of the subjects or citizens of such foreign countries, the same privileges or immunities will be extended to and enjoyed by British subjects.”⁶⁶ The United States and France both rushed to capitalize on Britain’s ‘diplomatic’ success by concluding the Treaty of Wangxia (1844) and the Treaty of Whampoa (1844), respectively. “These British, American, and French treaties reinforced each other and formed the beginning of a treaty system, which was further enriched and enlarged by later agreements.”⁶⁷ While this system of ‘unequal treaties’ would eventually provide fuel for nationalist attacks on Western imperialism, it is important to note that at the time they were viewed as perfectly acceptable solutions to the barbarian problem, ones that fit well within the bounds of Confucian ideology. As Murata Yūjirō points out, Qing officials “considered the equality of benefits gained through most-favored-nation status as the dynasty’s blessing of ‘universal benevolence’ and hence it was an extension of the past policy of ‘barbarian affairs.’”⁶⁸

However, the first unequal treaties did not solve the problem of Sino-Western relations so much as put it off until later. Indeed, Mancall suggests that the Sino-British conflict over opium actually marked the beginning of a Twenty-one Years’ War between China and the West (primarily Britain) dating from the first shots of the Opium War in 1839 to the end of the second opium war, generally referred to as the Arrow War, in 1860. “The immediate causes for the resumption of hostilities,” he points out – namely, the diplomatic row that arose over the removal of a British flag being flown by a Chinese ship, as well as the torture and execution of a French missionary – “could not mask the fact that the war was continuing because the West had not yet achieved its objectives.”⁶⁹ Despite initial attempts at accommodation on the part of the Chinese ‘foreign minister’ Qiying (Ch’i-ying),⁷⁰ China took an increasingly hard line against foreign demands, particularly over British access to Guangzhou, and

⁶⁶ Cited in Spence, *The Search for Modern China*, 161-62.

⁶⁷ Hsü, *The Rise of Modern China*, 245.

⁶⁸ Murata, “Dynasty, State, and Society,” 119.

⁶⁹ Mancall, *China at the Center*, 116.

⁷⁰ It should be noted that at the time, while Qiying performed the basic functions of a foreign minister, China had no such office.

refused to pursue treaty revisions as stipulated in the American and French treaties of Wangxia and Whampoa (and demanded by Britain based on most-favored-nation status). Thus, the Anglo-French Arrow War (1856-60) with China can be seen as a continuation of Western attempts to gain greater access to the Chinese economy and establish Western ground rules for China's relations with the West.⁷¹

The outcome of the Arrow conflict proved to be an even greater, and more humiliating, defeat for China than the Opium War because it was not just a defeat on the periphery of Chinese territory that could be safely ignored; the war struck at China's political heart with an Anglo-French expeditionary force entering Beijing itself, forcing the emperor, Xianfeng (Hsien-feng), to flee to Jehol, and destroying his summer palace (*Yuan Ming Yuan*). The Treaty of Tianjin (1858) and the Conventions of Beijing (1860) that ended the conflict established eleven more treaty ports, including Tianjin itself, and required China to pay reparations, allow foreign travel (including missionaries) in the interior of the country, cede the Kowloon peninsula to the British, and allow the establishment of a permanent diplomatic mission in the capital. This effectively ended the Chinese attempt to apply Confucian norms to its relations with the Western powers. In an imperial edict sanctioning the treaty, the Emperor Xianfeng declared: "England is an independent sovereign state, let it have equal status [with China]." ⁷² By the end of the 19th century, China's tributary relations with its vassal states would also be dismantled after losing two more imperialist wars, the Sino-French War (1884-85) and the first Sino-Japanese War (1894-95). Thus, Western imperialism resulted in the collapse of the Confucian system and China's forced absorption into the Western system of sovereign states.

Sowing the Seeds of Identity Change: Simple Learning & the Failure of the Self-Strengthening Movement

As the military superiority of the Western powers, as well as Japan, allowed them to establish ever-larger spheres of influence over Chinese territory throughout the latter half of the 19th century, the culturalist world-view of Chinese intellectuals became increasingly untenable. Yet as Levenson points

⁷¹ For discussions of the Arrow War, see Beeching, *The Chinese Opium Wars*; and J. Y. Wong, *Deadly Dreams: Opium, Imperialism, and the Arrow War (1856-1860) in China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

⁷² Cited in Zhao, *A Nation-State by Construction*, 48.

out, despite the fact that China's world, and its place within it, was rapidly changing, "there was an intellectual lag behind political change."⁷³ While they recognized that the West presented a serious material challenge that China had to meet, most Chinese intellectuals could not accept the possibility that it represented a fundamentally different kind of challenge than the barbarian invasions China had faced in the past. The new barbarians might be materially stronger at the moment, but China still represented a superior civilization – the *only* civilization – and thus would eventually impress upon the new arrivals the necessity of submitting to its superior virtue. As Jerome Grieder points out, "not until late in the century...did the Chinese perceive an intellectual dimension to the Western threat."⁷⁴ This made it difficult to develop adequate policy responses. Because China did not realize that its relations with the West represented "a contact with an other qualitatively different from any other till that point,"⁷⁵ its responses were limited to those that could fit Confucian standards. In essence, it tried to avoid the difficult task of social learning – i.e., rethinking its identity and interests – by concentrating instead on the easier task of simple learning – i.e., finding better ways to pursue its old interests. Yet because of the magnitude of the incompatibility between the two systems, and the continued military superiority of the West, China's initial response to the Western challenge proved inadequate.

The requirement that China's response remain within the parameters dictated by Confucianism of course did not mean that there was no debate over which specific policies to pursue. Indeed, Chinese decision-making in the latter part of the 19th century was marked by often intense competition between two groups of intellectuals – those that wanted to preserve all aspects of Chinese civilization and those that sought to adapt to the West while still preserving the core of Confucian values. This latter group, which Levenson called "the cautious eclectics," believed that "the only alternative to outright destruction of Chinese civilization by foreign conquerors was selective innovation by dedicated Chinese

⁷³ Joseph R. Levenson, *Liang Ch'i-ch'ao and the Mind of Modern China* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1959), 86.

⁷⁴ Jerome B. Grieder, *Intellectuals and the State in Modern China: A Narrative History* (New York: The Free Press, 1981), 52.

⁷⁵ Murata, "Dynasty, State, and Society," 118.

traditionalists.”⁷⁶ Selective innovation meant the adoption of those material capabilities of the West (e.g., guns, ships, and industrial technology) that could have practical use in the service of traditional Chinese values. This strategy would come to be expressed in the phrase, *zhongxue weiti, xixue weiyong* – “Chinese learning for substance, Western learning for use,” coined by the scholar-official Zhang Zhidong (Chang Chih-tung) in the 1890s. The *tiyong* concept, which can be used to describe China’s strategy for dealing with the West throughout the latter half of the 19th century, is still used by some scholars to express China’s essential dilemma of modernization (particularly military modernization) – “the tension which comes from seeking to balance that which is in essence Chinese against that which is needed from foreign sources.”⁷⁷ In other words, how can China become more like the West without losing its own identity? It was this basic question that Chinese reformers struggled with.

The first attempts to adapt Western technology came almost immediately after the first Opium War. Lin Zexu, whose efforts to halt the opium trade had helped to set the stage for the conflict, became an early advocate of military reform. He put forward a proposal in 1844 in which he stated: “Let us now, in this time of peace, adopt the superior skill of the barbarians in order to control them with greater effect.”⁷⁸ He created a staff for translating foreign documents on military technology and lobbied the government in Beijing for the financial resources necessary to purchase Western arms.⁷⁹ After its defeat in the Arrow War, China’s modernization efforts became more comprehensive in the form of the Self-strengthening Movement (1861-95). In addition to purchasing foreign arms, China sought “self-sufficiency in arms production – an across-the-board capability which required modernization not only in producing the weapons themselves but throughout the entire production cycle, from prospecting and mining raw materials, to transportation and communications infrastructures, to efficient manufacture, and

⁷⁶ Levenson, “The Problem of Intellectual Continuity,” 59.

⁷⁷ Bates Gill, and Taeho Kim, *China’s Arms Acquisitions From Abroad: A Quest for ‘Superb and Secret Weapons’*. SIPRI Research Report No. 11. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 12.

⁷⁸ Cited in Gill and Kim, *China’s Arms Acquisitions From Abroad*, 10.

⁷⁹ Gill and Kim, *China’s Arms Acquisitions From Abroad*, 10.

to maintenance, logistics and support of weapons in the field.”⁸⁰ Various arsenals, shipyards, and factories were established to improve China’s military capabilities.⁸¹

Suisheng Zhao suggests that China’s *tiyong* strategy to deal with the West “was a pragmatic nationalist program.”⁸² However, to associate the concept of *tiyong* with nationalism would be a serious mistake. The reform efforts of this period were extremely limited in scope because they merely sought to graft Western technology onto existing Chinese institutions without critically examining whether those institutions might themselves be to blame for China’s inability to compete. This becomes readily apparent when one considers that the first period of the Self-strengthening Movement coincided with the Tongzhi (T’ung-Chih) Restoration (1862-74), which attempted to solve China’s numerous social and political problems by “restoring the traditional order through reaffirmation of the old morality and application of knowledge to practical affairs.”⁸³ The possibility of a temporary restoration of dynastic authority, grounded in the traditional Chinese belief that history represents a continuous cycle of rise and decline, fell well within the bounds of Confucian ideology. As Mary Wright points out, a restoration in Confucian political theory “is not a *coup d’état* or a revolution or a new age, but an Indian summer in which the historically inevitable process of decline is arrested for a time by the ability and effort of the whole gentry-bureaucracy. The harmony of the natural and social order is temporarily re-established, not through basic changes but through emergency injections of the crucial element in that harmony: the devotion to duty of the indoctrinated Confucian official.”⁸⁴ As such, the Tongzhi Restoration was more of an attempt to prolong the existing Chinese system than to significantly reform it, making early modernization efforts inconsistent with modern nationalism.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 11.

⁸¹ For more detailed discussion, see Gill and Kim, *China’s Arms Acquisitions From Abroad*, 11-2; Kuang-sheng Liao, *Antiforeignism and Modernization in China, 1860-1980: Linkage Between Domestic Politics and Foreign Policy* (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 1984), 29-34; and John L. Rawlinson, *China’s Struggle for Naval Development, 1839-1895* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967).

⁸² Zhao, *A Nation-State by Construction*, 53.

⁸³ Hsü, *The Rise of Modern China*, 325.

⁸⁴ Mary Clabaugh Wright, *The Last Stand of Chinese Conservatism: The T’ung-Chih Restoration, 1862-1874* (New York: Atheneum, 1969), 45.

These ideological constraints left relatively little room for innovation. While attempts to improve China's military capabilities brought with them the beginnings of modern industry, as well as some important innovations in diplomacy (e.g., China's first proto-foreign office, the *Zongli Yamen* [*tsungli yamen*]), Hsü correctly points out that such reforms "really represent very superficial attempts at modernization....No attempts were made to assimilate Western institutions, philosophy, arts, and culture. The Self-strengthening efforts barely scratched the surface of modernization, without achieving a breakthrough in industrialization."⁸⁵ Among the various reasons he cites for its failure are a lack of central coordination, a shortage of capital, continued pressures from foreign powers, persistent technological backwardness, a lack of vision on the part of Chinese leaders, and social and psychological inertia that resulted in a strident resistance to change among much of the Confucian intellectual elite.⁸⁶ Even relatively minor reform efforts, such as using Western experts to teach astronomy and mathematics at the newly established *Tongwen Guan* (*T'ung-wen kuan* – College of Foreign Languages), prompted strong reactions from conservative officials. Woren (Wo-jen), a leading neo-confucian scholar and Grand Secretary, argued that the best way to save China "is to lay emphasis on propriety and righteousness, not on power and plotting. The fundamental effort lies in the minds of people, not in techniques."⁸⁷ Although conservative resistance did not prevent these most basic reforms, it did put a great deal of political pressure on early reformers. As a result, "the Self-strengtheners had to fight every inch of the way to launch the movement."⁸⁸

Such resistance to change persisted despite China's continued inability to defend against foreign aggression. Conflicts such as the Sino-French War and, in particular, the Sino-Japanese War laid bare the inadequacies of China's reform efforts during the Tongzhi Restoration. Yet the imperial court was slow to respond with more extensive efforts at modernization. Although moderate scholar-officials close to the emperor, like Zhang Zhidong and Weng Tonghe (Weng T'ung-ho), recognized the need for further

⁸⁵ Hsü, *The Rise of Modern China*, 355-56.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 356-59.

⁸⁷ Cited in Hsü, *The Rise of Modern China*, 349.

⁸⁸ Hsü, *The Rise of Modern China*, 350.

reform, their approach was essentially more of the same – “limited administrative reorganization along with adoption of some Western ‘implements’ in the Self-strengthening tradition.”⁸⁹ As such, they strongly resisted the efforts of more radical reformers, like Kang Youwei (K’ang Yu-wei) and Liang Qichao (Liang Ch’i-ch’ao), who were far more willing to sacrifice traditional Chinese institutions in order to save China itself. Kang’s persistent efforts to gain the ear of the emperor Guangxu (Kuang-Hsü) eventually paid off in 1898 with the implementation of the Hundred Days Reforms.⁹⁰ Over forty imperial decrees were issued between June 11 and September 20 aimed at reforming the educational system, public administration, and the economy. These decrees included dramatic changes to the civil service exams, abolition of numerous offices, and the appointment of reformers into positions of influence in the government.

Yet far from taking this as an opportunity to save the country, most officials fiercely resisted the reforms and did their best to avoid implementing them. Even moderate reformers saw them as too radical and an intolerable deviation from Confucian norms. The Empress Dowager, Cixi (Tz’u-hsi), who had ruled China from behind the scenes for decades during the minority of both the Tongzhi emperor (her son) and the current Guangxu emperor (her nephew), admonished the emperor for turning his back on Confucian tradition. The reform efforts were brought to an abrupt end when the emperor was overthrown and placed under house arrest in a palace coup led by Cixi, who once again assumed the reins of power. Most of the reforms initiated during the Hundred Days were reversed, while a number of prominent reformers were executed; Kang and Liang fled to Japan.

Although Hsü suggests that the reformers cannot entirely escape blame for their rather naïve attempts to force radical changes through the system without obtaining broader support, the real roots of failure for the Hundred Days in particular, and the Self-strengthening Movement in general, lay with the conservatism of most officials. Such resistance should not be surprising given the fact that reform inevitably threatened their interests, as well as those of many members of the imperial court. Yet official

⁸⁹ Ibid., 437.

⁹⁰ It should be noted that Guangxu had come to the throne in 1875 at the age of four, and that while he had assumed the right to rule himself in 1889, much of the real power still lay with his aunt.

conservatism must be seen in a broader light than just the desire by various political elites to maintain their own positions. The limited vision of so many of China's leaders that Hsü refers to was the result of the constraints placed on the efforts of reformers by the necessity of maintaining Confucianism. As he points out, even advocates of reform "never dreamed of remaking China into a modern state."⁹¹ Instead, their goal, as expressed in the *tiyong* principle, was to preserve the essence of Chinese civilization (i.e., Confucianism) through the adoption of Western techniques and technology. The catch-22 in which China was caught was that the modernization needed to save it as a state could only succeed by destroying it as a civilization.

Conservative critics of reform throughout the latter half of the 19th century were well aware of the dilemma presented by the *tiyong* principle. Many argued that such a strategy was impracticable, since *ti* and *yong* could not be separated; every set of practices came with its own essence. The fear among conservative Confucian intellectuals such as Woren was thus that "the more western learning came to be accepted as the practical instrument of life and power, the more Confucianism ceased to be *t'i*, essence, the naturally believed-in value of a civilization without a rival, and became instead an historical inheritance, preserved, if at all, as a romantic token of no-surrender to a foreign rival which had changed the essence of Chinese life."⁹² Essentially, even moderate reformers were wrong to think that they could have it both ways – selectively modernize China without infecting it with Western ways. If a choice had to be made between saving China as a state (*guo*) and saving China as a cultural system (*tianxia*), many conservatives preferred the latter.

While such sentiments might seem strange in a world where loyalty to the nation-state is an accepted fact of political life, they fit perfectly with traditional Confucian thought. After all, the choice was not a new one for China; it had faced conquest before. Yet even when the Chinese state had fallen to barbarian invaders in the past, it had always been reconstituted in more or less the same form. The Confucian view of history as a continuous cycle of dynastic rise and decline, as well as China's historical

⁹¹ Hsü, *The Rise of Modern China*, 356.

⁹² Levenson, "The Problem of Intellectual Continuity," 61.

experience with foreign threats, gave credence to the belief that no dynasty was as important as the continuation of the Confucian order itself. The *guo* could be sacrificed, but not *tianxia*. Had the new barbarians been willing to accept the Confucian system as those in the past had done, even if only for the sake of expediency, then this formula might have worked; history may have repeated itself and the dynastic cycle might have continued with *tianxia* once again in the hands of a foreign (now Western) dynasty. However, the Western powers had no intention of adopting Confucianism for their own use. They had their own ideas and institutions, their own system that they sought to export around the globe through trade, conquest, or both. Thus, the choice between *guo* and *tianxia* was a false one – the Confucian system was incompatible with the new challenger and could not be saved. As Levenson put it, “unless [China] chose to come down from its pedestal, its view of itself as *t’ien-hsia*, and to stand as a *kuo* among *kuo*, it would be smashed.”⁹³

From Culturalism to Nationalism: Social Learning & the Transformation of Chinese Identity

The collapse of the Confucian system of international relations, and China’s inability to develop an effective strategy to deal with the Western threat that did not sacrifice Confucian values, forced China to redefine itself and its place in the world. This finally began to occur at the end of the 19th century, decades after China’s first defeat at the hands of a Western power, as more and more Chinese intellectuals began to realize and accept that the Confucian order could not be maintained. Such acceptance did not come easily. Even for those intellectuals more open to the necessity of reform “it was a slow and agonizing process of self-discovery, testing at every step the subjective sense of Chinese identity against the objective circumstances of China’s uncertain place in the world.”⁹⁴ Yet loyalty to China as *guo* finally began to supersede loyalty to China as *tianxia*. Chinese culture remained important, but only as a means to an end – saving the Chinese state.⁹⁵ As such, even Confucianism could be sacrificed if it was necessary to protect China. The consequences of this for China’s identity were significant. As James

⁹³ Ibid., 104.

⁹⁴ Grieder, *Intellectuals and the State in Modern China*, 98.

⁹⁵ Levenson, “The Problem of Intellectual Continuity,” 108.

Harrison suggests, “in the process of learning to distinguish political and cultural values and in trying to save the Chinese people and state, even at the cost of the culture, modern Chinese nationalism was born.”⁹⁶ The result was a wholesale transformation of Chinese identity – from cultural-state to nation-state.

What made this transformation possible was the new understanding of the world brought about through long-term interaction with the West. Perhaps the most critical component of this was what Charlotte Furth has referred to as “the Chinese ‘discovery of the West’ – not merely as a source of imperialist aggression or technological wizardry, but as a world civilization in its own right.”⁹⁷ Before the end of the 19th century, the Western powers were still perceived through the Confucian lens much as they had been a hundred years before – as barbarians outside of (Chinese) civilization, not as representatives of a rival civilization. It is this “sense of rivalry” that Levenson suggested “is the essence of nationalism; no man trumpets ‘my country’ unless he realizes that other countries exist, with loyal populations of their own and a dangerous capacity to threaten.”⁹⁸ Such a realization was beyond the capacity of older scholar-officials still committed to the Confucian world order. Yet for younger generations of scholars, whose life experiences had been shaped by China’s humiliation at the hands of Western powers and whose knowledge of the world beyond China was often more extensive than their predecessors (or older contemporaries), the discovery of the West as a rival civilization allowed new perspectives to take root. Most importantly, it allowed them to borrow ideas from the West, which now served as a model for China’s reform.

In essence then, it was China’s experience with Western imperialism that resulted in the development of Chinese nationalism, providing support for the author’s proposition that nationalism is constituted by the international system. What is important to note here, however, is that it was not

⁹⁶ James P. Harrison, *Modern Chinese Nationalism* (New York: Hunter College of the City of New York, 1969), 13-4.

⁹⁷ Charlotte Furth, “Intellectual Change: From the Reform Movement to the May Fourth Movement, 1895-1920,” in *An Intellectual History of Modern China*, ed. Merle Goldman and Leo Ou-fan Lee (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 14.

⁹⁸ Levenson, *Liang Ch’i Ch’ao and the Mind of Modern China*, 110.

imperialism per se that produced Chinese nationalism, but the international system (namely, its social structure) that came with it. In other words, it was not just that foreign threats resulted in the Chinese public rallying to protect the nation, but that the social structure brought by the West forced China to redefine itself *as* a nation. This can be seen in the distinction both Levenson and Harrison make between nationalism and anti-foreignism.⁹⁹ As Harrison points out, anti-foreignism had often arisen in periods of conflict with barbarians and had even been institutionalized to some extent in the form of anti-Manchu secret societies that had for centuries desired the overthrow of the (foreign) Qing dynasty. Such societies, as well as much of the general public, responded strongly to the incursions of Western powers, particularly in areas like Guangzhou where contact was highest. Violent incidents were relatively common, and increased along with the rise in missionary work that occurred after the settlements of 1860. The Boxer Rebellion (1900) was perhaps the largest, and best-known, example of anti-foreignism.

However, Harrison argues, in contrast to Zhao (see Chapter 4), that while “xenophobia and varying degrees of concerns for the country as a whole were evident [in these incidents],...such rebels were not modern nationalists.”¹⁰⁰ Instead, they “represented an intensification of traditional patriotism.”¹⁰¹ In other words, they retained a commitment to Confucian ideas and institutions. Similarly, one Chinese scholar has argued that “traditional Chinese culture with its core of Confucianism was a system beyond nationalism...Within this system, nationalism and patriotism could not emerge. The so-called ancient Chinese patriotism that has been repeatedly discussed by many people was only sinocentrism.”¹⁰² Harrison suggests that true Chinese nationalism could only develop with the merger of “xenophobic mass patriotism with intellectual feelings of positive commitment to the nation-state.”¹⁰³ Yet such a commitment was contrary to Confucian values; indeed, it was wholly impossible since the

⁹⁹ Ibid., 109-11; Harrison, *Modern Chinese Nationalism*, 7-9.

¹⁰⁰ Harrison, *Modern Chinese Nationalism*, 8.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 9.

¹⁰² Cited in Suisheng Zhao, *A Nation-State by Construction: Dynamics of Modern Chinese Nationalism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), 43.

¹⁰³ Harrison, *Modern Chinese Nationalism*, 9.

nation-state did not yet exist as such in Chinese intellectual discourse. It was only when Chinese intellectuals began to import the idea of the nation-state from the West that true nationalism arose.

The redefinition of China's identity during the late-19th century represents a clear case of social learning. This learning process had been an on-going one. However, its character changed dramatically, along with Chinese perceptions of what the West represented, as the availability of information about the West – through the translation of Western books and travel to Western countries (or at least to Western concessions in China) – increased. During the first half of the century, the task of translating Western books into Chinese had fallen primarily on missionaries. As a result, 86% of the almost 800 titles translated between 1800 and 1867 were religious in nature and attracted little attention from most Chinese intellectuals. The Self-strengthening Movement brought with it active Chinese involvement in translating foreign books, as well as a shift in the types of books being translated. In line with the goals of the movement, about 70% of the works translated between 1850 and 1899 dealt with science and technology.¹⁰⁴ Such books, along with the far less numerous (though no less important) translations of history and geography, introduced Chinese intellectuals to new perspectives that helped to undermine many Confucian assumptions. “On the one hand there was the discovery of a world history encompassing a plurality of high civilizations in dynamic interaction with one another as well as with a ‘barbarian’ perimeter; on the other, there was the exploration of the implications of Western scientific law – particularly the laws of evolution..., but also those of Newtonian physics.”¹⁰⁵ The result was “a world-view which took away from Chinese their self-image as the sole source of world civilization, and exposed them as members of one culture and one nation among many.”¹⁰⁶

It was China's loss in the first Sino-Japanese War to a state that had once been a tributary that helped this new view to truly crystallize. Indeed, many scholars have suggested that this marked the birth of modern Chinese nationalism.¹⁰⁷ The defeat drove home to many intellectuals the inadequacies of

¹⁰⁴ Hsü, *The Rise of Modern China*, 515-16; Grieder, *Intellectuals and the State in Modern China*, 87.

¹⁰⁵ Furth, “Intellectual Change,” 16.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 16.

¹⁰⁷ Murata, “Dynasty, State, and Society,” 113; Xu, “Nationalism, Internationalism, and National Identity,” 102.

previous attempts at reform through self-strengthening, and brought about important changes in Chinese thinking. Scholars like Yen Fu argued that “the key to Western development...was the ‘different vision of reality’ which involved ideas and values; it was thought, not military power, which made a country strong and wealthy.”¹⁰⁸ Though such a sentiment fit the traditional Confucian belief in the non-material sources of strength, it was the ideas of the West that became increasingly paramount. Translation efforts began to focus more on politics, economics, and philosophy in search of the roots of Western material superiority. While some like Kang Youwei still hoped that Confucianism could be retained as an expression of China’s distinctive history and culture,¹⁰⁹ the goal of completely remodeling China’s institutions on the West left little room for traditional ideas. By the early 20th century, scholars such as Liang Qichao had come to the conclusion that “China’s disasters do not stem from betrayal of the genius of Chinese culture, from willful resistance to the authority of the classics; they come rather from insistence on that authority. Liberation is needed – from ‘false’ classics, from ‘true’ classics, from domination by any dead hand of the past. Evolution is the law of life,...even for China.”¹¹⁰

These shifting intellectual currents were further enhanced by the dramatic growth after 1895 of political study associations (*xue hui*). Kang was particularly instrumental in this. In trying to arouse support for his reform ideas prior to the Hundred Days, “he conducted a sort of educational and propaganda campaign among [the lettered elite], familiarizing them with world affairs and China’s problems, and urging them to make concerted efforts ‘to save the country’ through reform.”¹¹¹ He helped form a number of study associations, including the *Qiangxue hui* (*Ch’iang-hsüeh hui* – Society for the Study of National Strengthening) in 1895 and the *Baoguo hui* (*Pao-kuo hui* – Protect the Nation Society) in 1898. Their activities included

collecting books translated from Western languages, translating selected Western-language books, circulating these books among the members; translating newspapers

¹⁰⁸ Hsü, *The Rise of Modern China*, 517-18.

¹⁰⁹ Grieder, *Intellectuals and the State in Modern China*, 100; Harrison, *Modern Chinese Nationalism*, 11; Kung-Chuan Hsiao, *A Modern China and a New World: K’ang Yu-wei, Reformer and Utopian, 1858-1927* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1975), 104.

¹¹⁰ Levenson, *Liang Ch’i Ch’ao and the Mind of Modern China*, 92-3.

¹¹¹ Hsiao, *A Modern China and a New World*, 211.

published in foreign lands and distributing them in the provinces; promoting scientific studies by providing laboratory facilities and establishing museums; encouraging ‘useful knowledge’ by requiring each member to pursue a specific field of study; and sending ‘accomplished members’ to travel in China and abroad, with a view to giving them opportunities to acquire further knowledge and to contribute to it. Contacts were to be made with prominent officials, with sympathetic overseas Chinese, with Western scholars residing in China, and with learned societies in other countries.¹¹²

While these organizations proved to be short-lived due to conservative opposition, they helped set the stage for an explosion of new groups in the early 20th century that played an important role in changing the mindset of Chinese intellectuals.

Connected with the rise of study associations was the introduction of political newspapers and journals, many of which were published by the associations themselves. “The new press reported on foreign and domestic affairs, bringing new ideas, new terminology, and new information to its readers.”¹¹³ As information about China and the rest of the world became more widely disseminated to a younger generation of Chinese intellectuals less committed to the superiority of Confucian principles, many Chinese came to see themselves as part of a national community. As Xu suggests, “to a great extent, the new press served as glue, knitting the otherwise loosely organized Chinese society into a political body.”¹¹⁴ Its impact was unmistakable even to more conservative officials like Zhang Zhidong, who pointed out that “after 1895, literary men of patriotic spirit began to publish journals....As a result, gentry from the most obscure pockets in the realm, and isolated peasants, learned for the first time that there was a China.”¹¹⁵

These changes continued despite the failure of the Hundred Days and the subsequent exile of leading reformers like Kang and Liang. Indeed, it could be argued that intellectual changes accelerated after 1898. This was in part due to the failure of the last gasp of Chinese conservatism – the Boxer Rebellion. By 1900, anti-foreign violence perpetrated by a secret society called the *Yihetuan* (*I-ho ch’üan*) – Militia of Righteous Harmony (a.k.a. the Boxers) – had dramatically increased, resulting in

¹¹² Ibid., 212.

¹¹³ Xu, “Nationalism, Internationalism, and National Identity,” 104.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 104.

¹¹⁵ Cited in Xu, “Nationalism, Internationalism, and National Identity,” 105.

attacks on Western diplomats and a siege of their legations in Beijing. At first, the Boxers were supported by Cixi and other conservatives in the imperial court in the hopes that they would accomplish what the court itself had never been able to do – expel the foreigners from China. However, the Western powers reacted by sending an allied force of 18,000 men to storm the capital and defeat the Boxers, forcing the court to flee and eventually resulting in further Chinese concessions. After its failure, the Qing government finally began to initiate basic reforms, including extensive changes to the educational system, encouragement of foreign travel and study, and tentative moves toward establishing a constitutional monarchy.¹¹⁶

While these reforms would prove too little too late to save the Qing dynasty, the education reforms helped to reinforce the intellectual changes already underway. After 1900, the number of Chinese students studying abroad, particularly in Japan, increased dramatically. By 1906, the number of students studying in Japan had risen from less than 100 to at least 8,000.¹¹⁷ There they joined exiled reformers like Kang and Liang who were still actively trying to organize support for reform, as well as committed revolutionaries, like Sun Yat-sen, who sought the overthrow of the Qing.¹¹⁸ While Kang remained committed to some hybrid form of modernized Confucianism, Liang began to pursue new ideas during his time in Japan and published a number of newspapers that developed popular followings back in China (despite the fact that they were often banned), making Liang “a star of the public press.”¹¹⁹ It was in these papers that Liang began to expound on the idea of modern nationalism.

By 1902, Liang had come to the conclusion that “the sickly state of Chinese patriotism...was the root cause of [China’s] accumulated weaknesses.”¹²⁰ In *Xinminshuo* (*Hsin-min shuo* – The New Citizen), he argued that the strength of the imperialist powers came from their development of nationalism, which

¹¹⁶ For a complete list of reforms, see Hsü, *The Rise of Modern China*, 501-3.

¹¹⁷ Li Chien-nung, *The Political History of China, 1840-1928*, trans. and ed. Ssu-yu Teng and Jeremy Ingalls (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1956), 192; Philip C. Huang, *Liang Ch’i-ch’ao and Modern Chinese Liberalism* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1972), 41.

¹¹⁸ It should be noted that Liang wavered between advocating reform or revolution.

¹¹⁹ Li, *The Political History of China*, 189.

¹²⁰ Levenson, *Liang Ch’i Ch’ao and the Mind of Modern China*, 111.

gave them the cohesiveness necessary to not only flourish, but to expand.¹²¹ Such an idea did not yet exist in China, a fact that Liang lamented, because of China's traditional adherence to the idea of *tianxia*. Therefore, he argued that "if we wish to oppose the national imperialism of all the powers today and save China from great calamity and rescue our people the only thing for us to do is to adopt the policy of promoting our own nationalism."¹²² This could only be accomplished by inculcating the Chinese people with a sense of citizenship in the Chinese nation. "If it is the people of a state who govern, legislate, and plan for the interest of the whole state and stave off the troubles which might afflict the state, the people then cannot be bullied and the state cannot be overthrown. This means citizenry."¹²³ Liang's ideas, by making the final break with traditional Confucian thought, thus represent the first truly modern expression of Chinese nationalism.

Of course, this culturalism-to-nationalism argument is not without its critics. For instance, James Townsend argues that its "main weakness is that it exaggerates the totality and clarity of the change in question. It overstates both the dominance of culturalism and the weakness of pre-modern nationalism in imperial times, as well as overstating the eclipse of culturalism and triumph of nationalism in modern times."¹²⁴ Instead, he suggests, both have coexisted, albeit in varying proportions, throughout much of China's history. He further suggests that the errors in the argument "occur because [it] focuses on intellectual history, elite behaviour and official rhetoric, without taking full account of popular sentiments or the realities of statecraft, and because it does not consider carefully the conceptual problems involved in the study of nationalism and ethnicity. In particular, it does not analyse closely the Chinese nation and its changing relationship to other Chinese and non-Chinese communities."¹²⁵ In essence, Townsend argues that because the Chinese had possessed a common identity as a distinct cultural and political group long before the arrival of the West, many of the necessary elements of nationalism were already in place

¹²¹ Huang, *Liang Ch'i-ch'ao and Modern Chinese Liberalism*, 58; Hao Chang, *Liang Ch'i-ch'ao and Intellectual Transition in China, 1890-1907* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971), 157-64.

¹²² Cited in Harrison, *Modern Chinese Nationalism*, 16.

¹²³ Cited in Chang, *Liang Ch'i-ch'ao and Intellectual Transition in China, 1890-1907*, 164.

¹²⁴ James Townsend, "Chinese Nationalism," in *Chinese Nationalism*, ed. Jonathan Unger. (Armonk: M. E. Sharpe, 1996), 24.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 24.

to be drawn on by modern nationalists. Thus, to suggest that a fundamental transition had occurred between two distinct identities is flawed.

The fact that imperial China possessed many of the elements of modern nationalism is difficult to dispute. As Harrison points out, “for at least two millennia, there had been feelings of common characteristics and culture, of loyalty to a tradition and to a dynasty and its bureaucracy. There was patriotism in the sense of commitment to a home-land, to common ideals, and to a group of people.”¹²⁶ Thus, China certainly represented, in Anthony Smith’s terms, an *ethnie* or ethnic core. However, as Harrison goes on to say, it did not yet possess “the modern concept of owing one’s supreme loyalty to the nation-state, and all that it governed.”¹²⁷ While Townsend is correct to point out the dangers of oversimplifying the change from culturalism to nationalism, he is too quick to recognize the existence of a pre-modern Chinese nation. As discussed in Chapter 3, the modern nation is intimately linked with the modern state, which did not exist in traditional Chinese thought. While there was certainly a recognition that a Chinese cultural and political community existed, Townsend himself admits that it “was not a continuous or even prominent focus for organization or loyalty.”¹²⁸ To say that a Chinese nation existed despite the lack of any such belief, as Townsend does, flies in the face of what is generally understood about nationalism. He seems to be falling back on a primordialist notion of Chinese nationhood – a Chinese nation without nationalism. It was only when the Western idea of the nation spread to China that anything resembling modern nationalism could develop.

A second criticism that could be made of the culturalism-to-nationalism argument is its view of Chinese intellectual development at the turn of the century as a response to the West. As Furth points out, “one danger in the concept...is its tendency to suggest that the process was one of linear substitution of ‘Western’ ideas for native ones; and that Chinese played an intellectually passive role. Another is to foster the assumption that once the process of Westernization had occurred, it was impossible for Chinese

¹²⁶ Harrison, *Modern Chinese Nationalism*, 12.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 12.

¹²⁸ Townsend, “Chinese Nationalism,” 25.

thereafter to maintain any authentic commitment to traditional values.”¹²⁹ Instead, it must be recognized that Chinese intellectuals drew from various domestic traditions, even as they sought to adopt Western ideas, and that Confucianism was never totally expunged from China’s political culture.¹³⁰ Rebecca Karl makes a similar point when she argues that the knowledge China gained about the non-Western world, as fellow victims of Western imperialism, was as important to the reconfiguration of Chinese identity as the models it sought to borrow from the West.¹³¹

However, the caveats offered by Furth and Karl do little to undermine the central tenet of the culturalism-to-nationalism thesis – that the development of Chinese nationalism represents a fundamental change in China’s identity brought about through China’s interaction with the West. While it is certainly true that the intellectual transition in question involved a complex interplay between native Chinese ideas and knowledge gained about the rest of the world (both Western and non-Western), it seems unlikely that Chinese nationalism would have developed without these outside influences. Indeed, looking at the issue through the lens of international politics lends critical support to the culturalism-to-nationalism thesis by providing it with a stronger theoretical foundation. While even its critics have agreed that it provides a useful heuristic for understanding the development of Chinese nationalism, its lack of grounding in a broader theoretical framework has called it into question.¹³² By introducing into the argument the role that the international system plays in identity construction, we gain a far better understanding of what made this transition possible – namely, China’s recognition of a system of sovereign states, of which it was a part.¹³³

The preceding discussion of China’s response to the West is by necessity somewhat general and incomplete. However, it does provide a basic picture of the historical development of Chinese

¹²⁹ Furth, “Intellectual Change,” 15.

¹³⁰ Ibid., 15-6.

¹³¹ Rebecca E. Karl, *Staging the World: Chinese Nationalism at the Turn of the Twentieth Century* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002).

¹³² Townsend, “Chinese Nationalism.”

¹³³ A number of authors have argued that this recognition was a necessary condition for the development of Chinese nationalism, though without delving into the theoretical issues involved. See Harrison, *Modern Chinese Nationalism*, 14; Etienne Balazs, *Chinese Civilization and Bureaucracy: Variations on a Theme*, trans. H. M. Wright, ed. Arthur F. Wright (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1964), 22.

nationalism. This picture fits well with Hall's second sequence of transformational logic connecting changes in state identity to changes in the international system. Recall from Chapter 4 that in the case of Europe, it was the development of a new state identity – the nation-state – that produced changes in the international system. The new identity carried with it new interests and thereby fundamentally altered the dynamics of international politics. It is this first sequence – the nationalization of international relations – that Hall focused on. Yet as he suggests, the sequencing of this transformational logic can be reversed, with changes in the system producing changes in state identities and interests. It is this second sequence that best describes the development of Chinese nationalism.

China's encounter with the West introduced dramatic changes to the regional system in which it had been the dominant actor for centuries. Not only did it cease to be a strictly regional system, but the new, increasingly global system was characterized by a very different distribution of material capabilities that favored a completely different type of state. This resulted in the breakdown of the international norms (i.e., the tribute system) that had defined the Confucian system. With the breakdown of these norms, and the continued challenge posed by Western power, China was forced to reform its own institutions and rethink the legitimizing principles that had given expression to its collective identity as a cultural-state. As such, this identity could no longer be sustained, and had to be replaced by a new identity based on ideas adopted from the West – namely, China as a nation-state. Thus, it becomes clear that nationalism can be seen as constituted by the international system.

Of course, as realists would point out, the disparity in material capabilities between China and the West played an important part in this process. This certainly cannot be disputed. As already suggested, if the disparity in power had been reversed, then not only would there have been no necessity for China to redefine itself and its relations with the world, but it is quite conceivable that the Confucian system might have won out and forced the West to conform to it. The point to be made here is not that power relations are unimportant, but that they do not provide a full account of Sino-Western relations during the 19th century. To treat these relations as simply a conflict between competing powers is to miss the real substance of that conflict – the incompatibility of two different systems based on dramatically different

conceptions of self. While the power factor requires us to consider the relationship between (material) power and the constitution of state identity, it does not invalidate focusing on the process of social construction itself. As suggested by the realist-constructivist perspective introduced in Chapter 2, one cannot fully separate power and ideas. What remains to be considered, however, are the macro- and micro-structural dimensions of Chinese nationalism and their impact on Chinese foreign policy. These will be examined in the next two chapters.

Chapter 6. ‘A CHICKEN CAN’T STAND ON ONE FOOT’: THE TAIWAN ISSUE & THE MACRO-STRUCTURAL DIMENSION OF CHINESE NATIONALISM

In the last chapter, it was argued that the development of Chinese nationalism during the 19th century was the result of changes in the social (and material) structure of the regional system of which China was a part – namely, its breakdown and incorporation into the broader international system based on Western ideas and norms (e.g., sovereignty and the nation-state). What remains to be considered is the impact that this change in identity had on the definition of Chinese interests, and consequently on Chinese foreign policy behavior. As discussed in Chapter 4, different types of states have different interests, and may therefore behave differently. In the case of Europe, the modern state developed through a number of stages, each of which had important implications for the interests these states sought to pursue. While they are arguably less clear cut, these stages were mirrored in China’s own transition from cultural-state to nation-state – i.e., it required China to redefine itself in both territorial and national terms. In order to understand the impact that nationalism had on Chinese interests, it is thus necessary to consider each of these processes.

While a number of specific cases might be used to examine these issues, perhaps the best case to consider is that of Taiwan. Few issues evoke so strong a nationalist reaction, from party hard-liners to more liberal-minded intellectuals, than the issue of Taiwan. As one professor at Peking University suggested, noting that the outline of China’s territory resembles a chicken – with the islands of Hainan and Taiwan as the feet, “a chicken can’t stand on one foot.”¹ Yet this has not always been the case. Sophia Yen has argued that until the late-19th century, Taiwan was both geographically and politically

¹ During lecture given as part of *Pitt in China* study abroad program.

peripheral to the Chinese empire.² Similarly, Denny Roy points out that “through most of antiquity, the Chinese government considered Taiwan beyond the pale of Chinese civilization.”³ How then did Taiwan achieve the status of a vital Chinese ‘national’ interest, one that continues to hold the prospect for serious international conflict? To answer this question it is necessary to examine how China’s adaptation to the (Western) international system, and its subsequent changes in identity, forced it to redefine its relationship to territory and its own people, and hence its conception of its interests. In doing so, it will become clear that the Taiwan issue in Chinese foreign policy is one that has been socially constructed in conjunction with the development of Chinese nationalism.

From Pirates’ Lair to Chinese Province: Taiwan’s Changing Territorial Status

Analysts of Chinese foreign policy have often identified certain basic continuities in the vital interests pursued by imperial, republican, and communist regimes. Foremost of these interests is territorial integrity and the reclamation of lost Chinese territory.⁴ A document written for the British Foreign Office in 1943 summarized Republican China’s foreign policy goals as follows:

China will seek the restoration of the Chinese Empire of the hey-day of the Manchu Dynasty, meaning the recovery of Tibet, Sinkiang [Xinjiang], Mongolia, Manchuria, Formosa [Taiwan], and Hong Kong and the islands off the China coast. For what the present declarations of her leaders may be worth, she will not lay claim to any of the former semi-tributary states on her periphery, such as Korea, Upper Burma, Siam [Thailand], Annam [central Vietnam], and Tonquin [northern Vietnam]. But here again the Chinese would no doubt prefer to see these regions under nominally independent Governments, which could be taken gradually under their protection, rather than see them re-incorporated in the dominions of Britain and other European Powers.⁵

² Sophia Su-fei Yen, *Taiwan in China’s Foreign Relations 1836-1874* (Hamden: The Shoe String Press, 1965), 297.

³ Denny Roy, *Taiwan: A Political History* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003), 11.

⁴ Andrew J. Nathan, and Robert S. Ross, *The Great Wall and the Empty Fortress: China’s Search for Security* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1997), 16; Michael H. Hunt, *The Genesis of Chinese Communist Foreign Policy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 10-7.

⁵ Hans van de Ven, “Some Historical Perspectives on the Diplomacy of Chinese Nationalism,” *Issues & Studies* 36, no. 6 (November/December 2000): 55.

Harold Hinton notes similar statements from the PRC under Mao Zedong.⁶ Such goals are indicative of what Michael Hunt refers to as “the commitment to an inherited definition of security” based on “a core cultural area” and “those peripheral areas important to the security of the core.”⁷

Given the fact that territorial integrity has long been treated as a fundamental interest of sovereign states, such an observation about Chinese interests might be considered as stating the obvious. Yet as discussed in Chapter 4, the significance of territory to state interests largely depends on the type of state (e.g., dynastic, territorial, or national) in question. Thus, we might expect territory to take on different meanings for China depending on its type identity. If so, then we cannot treat China’s territorial interests – its concerns for core and periphery – unproblematically. Not only might its behavior toward the periphery change, but more importantly the determination of what constitutes core and what constitutes periphery may be subject to change. In other words, the importance of any given territory would be determined, in part, by the identity of the state as it is constituted by the international system. This becomes quite clear when we examine the changing territorial status of Taiwan.

Discovery & Disinterest: Taiwan & the Maritime Interests of the Chinese Cultural-State

Taiwan’s relationship with mainland China has long been shrouded in controversy and ambiguity. Despite its close proximity to the mainland, Chinese settlement of the island began relatively late. Its original inhabitants, who now make up less than one percent of Taiwan’s population, were aboriginal tribes that migrated there primarily from Southeast Asia. Chinese began to settle in the Penghu (P’eng-hu) islands (a.k.a., Pescadores), off the western coast of Taiwan, around the 7th century, and in Taiwan itself by the 12th century.⁸ However, these early Chinese settlements represented little more than a “migratory trickle.”⁹ Indeed, Penghu initially saw far more settlement activity than did the far larger Taiwan. The first major wave of Chinese settlement on Taiwan did not begin until the 16th century. By

⁶ It should be noted that Hinton emphasizes the propaganda value of such statements. Harold C. Hinton, *Communist China in World Politics* (London: Macmillan, 1966), 113-14.

⁷ Hunt, *The Genesis of Chinese Communist Foreign Policy*, 10; see also Michael D. Swaine, and Ashley J. Tellis, *Interpreting China’s Grand Strategy: Past, Present, and Future* (Santa Monica: RAND, 2000).

⁸ John F. Copper, *Taiwan: Nation-State or Province?* 4th ed. (Boulder: Westview Press, 2003), 31.

⁹ Simon Long, *Taiwan: China’s Last Frontier* (London: Macmillan, 1991), 5.

1624, the Chinese population on Taiwan had reached 25,000-50,000, and continued to grow rapidly throughout the 17th century, perhaps reaching 100,000 by the 1680s. The growth in Taiwan's Chinese population resulted in the displacement of many of its aboriginal inhabitants to more forested and mountainous regions in the central and eastern parts of the island.¹⁰

Despite increased Chinese settlement on Taiwan, however, its political incorporation into the larger Chinese empire was far from assured. Aside from a few brief attempts at exploration in the 3rd and early-7th centuries, Taiwan was largely ignored by China until the Ming dynasty. It was generally considered part of the kingdom of Liuchiu (Liu-ch'iu – the Ryukyu islands), and appears in the records of the Sui dynasty as Tai Liuchiu (Great Ryukyu).¹¹ In 1430, during China's brief period of naval exploration under the Ming, the explorer, Zheng He (Cheng Ho), landed there by accident and brought word of it (as well as some medicinal herbs) back to the imperial court. His descriptions of the island, along with reports of its extensive maritime trade, helped to spark some temporary interest in Taiwan as officials began to search court records for references to it. Yet despite this initial interest, "no plans for colonization of the island were drawn up and no attempt was made to take over possession."¹² When Zheng died in 1435, interest in Taiwan quickly died with him. For the next two centuries, "Taiwan became mainly known as a hotbed of piracy."¹³ As a result, Simon Long points out that "by the middle of the seventeenth century, the Chinese claim to Taiwan was unformulated. Taiwan was an outpost, a haunt of savages and pirates and in no way incorporated into the Chinese polity."¹⁴

Given the Western history of exploration and expansion, China's failure to incorporate Taiwan into its empire seems difficult to fathom. It would have been inconceivable for such an island, strategically situated to aid in coastal defense (or offense) and provide greater access to maritime trade, as

¹⁰ Shinkichi Eto, "An Outline of Formosan History," in *Formosa Today*, ed. Mark Mancall (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, Publishers, 1968), 43; Roy, *Taiwan*, 12, 18; Yu-ming Shaw, "Modern History of Taiwan: An Interpretative Account," in *China and the Taiwan Issue*, ed. Hungdah Chiu (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1979), 9; and Edwin A. Winckler, "Mass Political Incorporation, 1500-2000," in *Contending Approaches to the Political Economy of Taiwan*, ed. Edwin A. Winckler and Susan Greenhalgh (Armonk: M. E. Sharpe, Inc., 1988), 49.

¹¹ Long, *Taiwan*, 4-5; Copper, *Taiwan*, 31; Winckler, "Mass Political Incorporation," 49.

¹² W. G. Goddard, *Formosa: A Study in Chinese History* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1966), 39.

¹³ Long, *Taiwan*, 6.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 11.

well as having great potential for economic development, to remain unclaimed for so long had it existed off the coast of Europe. What then explains China's complete disinterest in Taiwan? One explanation could be China's traditional preoccupation with security threats from Inner Asia.¹⁵ While China's northern frontier had often been vulnerable to attacks from nomadic and semi-nomadic tribes, the geography of its southern and maritime frontiers presented far less of a problem. Jane Leonard argues that its relations with maritime Asia "were much more relaxed and passive...[since it was] regarded as essentially peaceful, distant, and fragmented in a geopolitical sense."¹⁶ Given the balance of threats with which they were forced to contend, the Chinese might be excused for failing to recognize the potential value of an island whose possession would eventually come to be so contested. This is even truer of the Manchu-ruled Qing dynasty, which had even less experience with or interest in maritime affairs than the Ming, and hence had an even more continental strategic orientation.¹⁷

However, while the relative lack of security concerns along China's maritime frontier certainly influenced its disinterest in Taiwan, a more complete answer lies in the interests it derived from its identity as a cultural-state. While China had security concerns like every other state, its primary interest as the Middle Kingdom – "its axiomatic policy," in the words of Mark Mancall – was the defense of the institutional and normative order conceived by Confucian doctrine and made manifest through the tribute system.¹⁸ It has often been suggested that such interests favored, to paraphrase W. G. Goddard, conquest by civilization rather than by the sword – i.e., soft power strategies of cultural influence were preferable to the hard power of military force.¹⁹ As John Fairbank and Ssu-yü Têng once suggested, "tribute was a *substitute* for more forceful domination."²⁰ If that is the case, then China's disinterest in the active

¹⁵ Goddard, *Formosa*, 37; Jane Kate Leonard, *Wei Yuan and China's Rediscovery of the Maritime World* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984), 36; Nathan and Ross, *The Great Wall and the Empty Fortress*, 193.

¹⁶ Leonard, *Wei Yuan and China's Rediscovery of the Maritime World*, 40.

¹⁷ See Leonard, *Wei Yuan and China's Rediscovery of the Maritime World*, 63-5.

¹⁸ Mark Mancall, "The Persistence of Tradition in Chinese Foreign Policy," in *The Foreign Policy of China*, ed. King C. Chen (Roseland: East-West Who? Inc., Publishers, 1972), 34.

¹⁹ Goddard, *Formosa*, 38.

²⁰ John K. Fairbank, and Ssu-yü Têng, *Ch'ing Administration: Three Studies* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1960), 130, n. 34. For an extensive discussion of Chinese attitudes towards military force in classical China, see Herrlee G. Creel, *The Western Chou Empire*, vol. 1 of *The Origins of Statecraft in China* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1970), 242-316.

colonization of Taiwan might make some sense. However, while such norms certainly had operational consequences, they should not be overblown. As Mancall points out, “there were...no moral inhibitions to prevent the development of calculated policies...[n]or was there any conflict concerning the means to be used to obtain the primary policy objective.”²¹ China was often willing to use force to protect its interests. Indeed, recent scholarship has shown that, Confucian ideology aside, China has often taken a very realist view toward relations with its neighbors.²²

While the impact of Confucian norms on the means China has used to pursue its interests may be up for debate, what is more important for our purposes is their impact on the ends themselves – i.e., China’s conception of its own territorial interests. Some scholars, such as Owen Lattimore, have argued that, at least in the north, China had a strong preference for rigid frontiers to separate Chinese civilization from barbarians that could not be effectively controlled. Indeed, because of the dramatic differences in geography, agriculture, language, and lifestyle, Lattimore asserted that the dividing line between China and the northern steppes was “one of the most absolute frontiers in the world,” one which the Chinese sought to delineate with the construction of the Great Wall.²³ Ng Chin-keong argues that China had an equally strong sense of its maritime boundaries, citing efforts to accurately delineate administrative boundaries as Chinese territorial control expanded southward along the coast.²⁴ However, Arthur Waldron and others offer the contrary opinion “that the idea of clear boundaries is not, in the earliest period of history, a particularly strong one in the Chinese tradition.”²⁵ Confucian belief held that the emperor ruled over *tianxia* – all under Heaven. Thus, “legal boundaries could not exist between societies since all societies were part of a socially and culturally hierarchical, not a legal and egalitarian,

²¹ Mancall, “The Persistence of Tradition in Chinese Foreign Policy,” 34.

²² For instance, see Alastair Iain Johnston, *Cultural Realism: Strategic Culture and Grand Strategy in Chinese History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995).

²³ Owen Lattimore, *Inner Asian Frontiers of China* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1962), 21. See also Owen Lattimore, *Studies in Frontier History: Collected Papers 1928-1958* (London: Oxford University Press, 1962), 98-9.

²⁴ Ng Chin-keong, “Maritime Frontiers, Territorial Expansion and *Hai-fang* during the Late Ming and High Ch’ing,” in *China and Her Neighbors: Borders, Visions of the Other, Foreign Policy 10th to 19th Century*, ed. Sabine Dabringhaus and Roderich Ptak (Weisbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 1997).

²⁵ Arthur Waldron, *The Great Wall of China: From History to Myth* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 42.

universe.”²⁶ In other words, Chinese ‘sovereignty’ technically extended to all territories and all societies even if they were ‘allowed’ to be self-governing.

If Confucian norms did not recognize the existence of boundaries between states, what explains the Chinese desire in some cases to create them? The answer lies in the meaning they were given. As Lloyd Eastman points out, “the concept of fixed and precise boundaries was not alien to the Chinese mind. These boundaries, however, were not considered a mark of territorial sovereignty, but rather were thought to demark divisions of administrative jurisdiction.”²⁷ In essence, the Chinese recognized that distance, geographical barriers, and cultural incompatibility put limits on the effective range of direct Chinese control.²⁸ Thus, practical concerns for administration and defense sometimes required the careful delineation of borders, along natural geographic ones when possible,²⁹ by constructing their own physical barriers when necessary. As Waldron put it, “wall-building was thought of as a way of providing boundaries when Heaven had neglected to make them clear.”³⁰ Yet as Lien-sheng Yang points out, “the boundary need not always be a line. It might be a belt of land in which both sides refrained from occupancy and cultivation, or a zone in which the people belonged to both countries, or a buffer state.”³¹ Even during historical periods where the collapse of central authority produced a system of independent polities resembling the European interstate system, the attitude toward specific territorial boundaries remained somewhat ambivalent.³² As such, one should be careful not to equate this with the concept of sovereign territory associated with the modern state. Even physical barriers like the Great Wall merely

²⁶ Mark Mancall, *China at the Center: 300 Years of Foreign Policy* (New York: The Free Press, 1984), 30.

²⁷ Lloyd E. Eastman, *Throne and Mandarins: China's Search for a Policy During the Sino-French Controversy 1880-1885* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967), 43.

²⁸ Lattimore, *Studies in Frontier History*, 98; Mancall, *China at the Center*, 31.

²⁹ See Johannes L. Kurz, “The Yangzi in the Negotiations between the Southern Tang and Its Northern Neighbors (Mid-Tenth Century),” in *China and Her Neighbors: Borders, Visions of the Other, Foreign Policy 10th to 19th Century*, ed. Sabine Dabringhaus and Roderich Ptak (Weisbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 1997).

³⁰ Waldron, *The Great Wall of China*, 43.

³¹ Lien-sheng Yang, “Historical Notes on the Chinese World Order,” in *The Chinese World Order: Traditional China's Foreign Relations*, ed. John King Fairbank (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968), 22.

³² See Christian Lamouroux, “Geography and Politics: The Song-Liao Border Dispute of 1074/75,” in *China and Her Neighbors: Borders, Visions of the Other, Foreign Policy 10th to 19th Century*, ed. Sabine Dabringhaus and Roderich Ptak (Weisbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 1997).

represented cultural boundaries. “It was never a political or even a jurisdictional boundary.”³³ Indeed, China’s administrative reach often extended beyond the Great Wall to include large parts of Mongolia and Manchuria. The same was true of the Chinese coast.

The fact that the concept of *tianxia* was more myth than reality does not detract from its potential to influence Chinese behavior. As part of China’s socially constructed identity as a cultural-state, it served to provide China with an idea about its interests – specifically, it was unnecessary to be overly concerned with demarking specific territorial boundaries except to deal with practical issues of administration. Eastman cites an interesting case that helps to illustrate this point. In the midst of a border dispute with Vietnam in 1725, the Vietnamese protested against the Chinese proposal to use a river to mark the border. The exchange between the Chinese and Vietnamese emperors is informative:

[Chinese decree:] ‘We exercise universal authority over the whole world...In all the present subject states, there is no territory that is not Ours. Why must you quibble over this mere forty *li* [thirteen miles] of land?’ The decree continued by giving the Vietnamese emperor a sound scolding for his insubordinate behavior, adding that ‘the delineation of the frontiers and the determination of the borders ought to be the first task of government.’ After this tongue-lashing, the Vietnamese ruler reportedly expressed his abject repentance – whereupon [Chinese emperor Yongzheng] Yung-cheng graciously bestowed the full forty *li* of contested territory on Vietnam in perpetuity.³⁴

Whether the Vietnamese were really so repentant is immaterial. This case illustrates that “despite the rather clear demarcation that might mark off the lands of a tributary from the empire, the Chinese did not consider that state boundaries circumscribed Chinese sovereignty.”³⁵

Of course, one might suggest that such statements merely represented Confucian rhetoric. However, this does not explain the decision to give in on the issue. Indeed, Chih-yu Shih argues that China has always demonstrated “a relatively flexible approach to the acquisition and relinquishing of territory...What worried the Chinese leaders the most involves symbolic issues relating to the emperors’ place vis-à-vis barbarians.”³⁶ While Shih argues that this emphasis on symbolism has shaped Chinese

³³ Mancall, “The Persistence of Tradition in Chinese Foreign Policy,” 31.

³⁴ Eastman, *Throne and Mandarins*, 43.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 43-4.

³⁶ Chih-yu Shih, *Navigating Sovereignty: World Politics Lost in China* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 57.

strategic culture to the present,³⁷ its implications for imperial China's territorial interests become clear – territory itself had less importance to the Chinese than the maintenance of its identity as the Middle Kingdom. Andrew Nathan and Robert Ross suggest that this helps to explain the relative lack of Chinese concern regarding Western pressures on its neighbors. “In Qing eyes fights among barbarians of different degrees of closeness to China did not mean the transfer of territory from their empire to another, just adjustments of relations among their diverse cultural inferiors.”³⁸

It is this ambivalent attitude towards territory that helps to explain China's maritime interests and its disinterest in Taiwan. According to Leonard, “the early Ming emperors were responsible for redefining China's interests in the Nan-yang [Southern Ocean] to emphasize peace, security, and China's active exercise of overlordship.”³⁹ It essentially pushed a more stringent application of the tribute system – trying to reduce (in the end, unsuccessfully) the private junk trade and seeking to enforce peace among its tributaries. “Open communications and tributary relations were considered necessary so that the stabilizing effect of *te* [virtue] could be channeled to the Nan-yang and expressed in good government and peaceful relations among the sea kingdoms.”⁴⁰ When this failed, China claimed the right to intervene. However, China's policies were geared toward the strengthening of its position within the order laid out by Confucian norms, not trade or territorial aggrandizement. Since its aboriginal inhabitants did not participate in the tribute system, Taiwan was of little concern. Even during a period when China was actively engaged with its maritime neighbors, and was willing to intervene in disputes between distant tributaries in Southeast Asia,⁴¹ the conquest of Taiwan was inconsequential to the pursuit of its culturally-defined interests. Thus, despite its proximity to the Chinese coast, it might be argued that Taiwan did not even warrant being part of China's periphery. Growing threats along its northern frontier only served to reinforce this orientation.

³⁷ Ibid., 57-66. See also Jonathan R. Adelman, and Chih-yu Shih, *Symbolic War: The Chinese Use of Force, 1840-1980* (Taipei: Institute of International Relations, 1993).

³⁸ Nathan and Ross, *The Great Wall and the Empty Fortress*, 30. Eastman makes a similar point, see Eastman, *Throne and Mandarins*, 30, 41-3.

³⁹ Leonard, *Wei Yuan and China's Rediscovery of the Maritime World*, 47-8.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 48-9.

⁴¹ Ibid., 49-50.

Simple Learning & Shifting Interests: China's Response to Taiwan as an Internal Security Threat

Given its complete lack of interest in Taiwan, China was readily willing to give up administrative control of the island (though certainly not its inherent right to rule) to Western powers. Although the Portuguese were the first Europeans to spot the island in 1517, giving it the name Ilha Formosa – ‘beautiful island,’ it was the Dutch who would first colonize Taiwan over a century later. Their first target was not Taiwan, however, but Penghu, on which they built a fort in 1622 in order to put pressure on the Portuguese trade in Macao. While China did not lay administrative claim to Taiwan, Penghu had been incorporated into the empire at least by 1368 as part of Fujian province.⁴² As a result, China became involved in a dispute with the Dutch over control of the islands. The dispute was settled when the Chinese agreed to allow the Dutch to establish a trading post on Taiwan in exchange for their evacuation from Penghu. This, as both Goddard and Long suggest, was a clever ruse to keep the Dutch at arms’ length, since China had little interest in the island.⁴³ While the Chinese found this to be a convenient solution to dealing with the Dutch problem, the Dutch themselves were quite satisfied, believing that “they were being handed a bigger and better Macao.”⁴⁴ They built a fort in 1624 near the present-day city of Tainan. Although the Spanish and Japanese briefly tried to compete with the Dutch for influence over the island (1626-42 and 1628-36, respectively), both attempts failed. As the Dutch began to expand their control over the island and its aboriginal inhabitants (though never the whole island), they encouraged Chinese farmers to settle the land, sparking a new wave of Chinese emigration to the island.

Ironically, the events that first brought Taiwan to the full attention of the imperial court foreshadowed the current conflict between the PRC and Republic of China (ROC).⁴⁵ In 1644, the Ming dynasty collapsed through a combination of internal disorder and Manchu invasion. The Qing dynasty that succeeded it would continue to encounter resistance from Ming loyalists intent on removing

⁴² Goddard, *Formosa*, 36. It should be noted that Shaw dates the incorporation of Penghu to 1225; see Shaw, “Modern History of Taiwan,” 8.

⁴³ Goddard, *Formosa*, 50; Long, *Taiwan*, 8.

⁴⁴ Long, *Taiwan*, 8.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 11.

‘barbarians’ from the imperial throne. One such loyalist was Zheng Chenggong (Cheng Ch’eng-kung, a.k.a., Koxinga), the son of a Chinese pirate who had built an extensive maritime trading network in the 1620s and eventually attained the rank of admiral in the Ming navy. While his father switched his support to the Qing, Zheng used the power base he inherited to support the Ming cause, establishing control over much of the southern coast and launching a failed attempt to conquer Nanjing in 1658. He was eventually forced to flee to Taiwan where he succeeded in forcing out the Dutch in 1662, establishing a new regime modeled on the Ming. Although he died shortly thereafter, the short-lived Zheng dynasty would continue to be a thorn in the side of China’s new Manchu rulers. After two failed attempts to attack Taiwan in 1664 and 1665, the Qing attempted to isolate Zheng by forcibly evacuating residents living within ten miles of the coasts of Zhejiang, Fujian, and Guangdong provinces. The success of such policies was limited at best. The Zheng regime continued to maintain trading outposts along the coast, and took advantage of a major rebellion against Qing rule (the Revolt of the Three Feudatories) to establish a military presence in Amoy in 1673. However, by 1680, the Qing succeeded in driving the Zheng from the mainland; in 1683, China finally mounted an invasion of Taiwan that succeeded in conquering the island.⁴⁶

The defeat of the Zheng regime presented a serious policy dilemma to the Qing court – what to do with Taiwan? On the one hand, “Taiwan had not previously been part of the Chinese empire and evoked no patriotic stirrings in the hearts or minds of mainland Chinese elites.”⁴⁷ Despite a growing Chinese population, it remained ‘beyond the pale of Chinese civilization’ – “a peripheral little mud ball, insufficient to significantly expand Chinese territory, a desolate and essentially uninhabited place, untouched by the wonder of the celestial deities,” as one Qing official described it.⁴⁸ In addition, it was at

⁴⁶ Ibid., 12; Leonard, *Wei Yuan and China’s Rediscovery of the Maritime World*, 66-70; and John E. Wills, Jr., “The Seventeenth-Century Transformation: Taiwan Under the Dutch and the Cheng Regime,” in *Taiwan: A New History*, ed. Murray A. Rubinstein (Armonk: M. E. Sharpe, 1999), 95-102.

⁴⁷ Roy, *Taiwan*, 19.

⁴⁸ Cited in Gary Marvin Davison, *A Short History of Taiwan: The Case for Independence* (Westport: Praeger Publishers, 2003), 23.

the edge of China's range of effective control.⁴⁹ Since the island was deemed economically insignificant and, given the Qing dynasty's decidedly continental strategic orientation, militarily inconsequential, continued occupation seemed undesirable. "Virtually all prominent officials of the Qing court advised the emperor to abandon Taiwan to the aborigines."⁵⁰ Shi Lang (Shih Lang), the Qing admiral responsible for the final defeat of the Zheng regime, even discussed with Dutch representatives the possibility of returning Taiwan to their control.⁵¹

On the other hand, its occupation by Zheng's forces had demonstrated that Taiwan could present a serious threat to internal security if occupied by dissident Chinese opposed to Qing rule. Consideration was therefore given to the forcible evacuation of all Chinese from the island to prevent it from again becoming a base of resistance to Qing rule. Toward that end, about 40,000 of Zheng's troops were either sent back to their communities on the mainland or integrated into the Qing's own forces. In addition, coastal regulations adopted in 1683 put pressure on Taiwan's civilian population to leave by forcing those without wives or property to return to the mainland. As a result, it was estimated that by September 1684 the island's Chinese population had been cut in half. However, Shi successfully argued against this policy, pointing out that the complete evacuation of Taiwan was impractical given the length of time it would take and the potential social problems it would create on the mainland, not to mention the possibility that elements of the Zheng regime might remain to cause trouble as pirates and brigands.⁵² More importantly, Taiwan represented "a defense shield for several southeastern provinces. If abandoned," he argued, "it will be occupied by either the natives or bandits."⁵³ He also suggested that the island possessed some products that would make it economically worthwhile to retain.⁵⁴ In the end, Shi managed to convince the court to extend its administrative control to Taiwan. Thus, in April 1684,

⁴⁹ Winckler, "Mass Political Incorporation," 48.

⁵⁰ Davison, *A Short History of Taiwan*, 23.

⁵¹ The Dutch were uninterested in such a proposal (at least without major Chinese concessions on trade) due to the lack of profitability of their earlier efforts on the island. See John E. Wills, Jr., *Embassies and Illusions: Dutch and Portuguese Envoys to K'ang-hsi, 1666-1687* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984), 148-51.

⁵² John R. Shepherd, "The Island Frontier of the Ch'ing, 1684-1780," in *Taiwan: A New History*, ed. Murray A. Rubinstein (Armonk: M. E. Sharpe, 1999), 108-09.

⁵³ Cited in Roy, *Taiwan*, 18-9.

⁵⁴ Shepherd, "The Island Frontier of the Ch'ing, 1684-1780," 109.

Taiwan was formally incorporated into the Chinese empire as a prefecture of Fujian province. Some 10,000 troops were garrisoned on the island to guard against pirates and Zheng loyalists.⁵⁵

The decision to make Taiwan a Chinese prefecture represents an important first step toward its becoming the vital Chinese interest that it is today. However, this must also be considered a very tentative step. First, it is important to note that this decision does not yet represent a change in China's identity as a cultural-state – i.e., China did not have to redefine itself in order to expand its administrative control to another territory. This was a case of simple learning; China was seeking to achieve its culturally-defined interests better by dealing with a concrete threat to its internal security. After all, one cannot be the Middle Kingdom if the emperor's legitimacy is being directly challenged by a hostile regime. In addition, the lack of Dutch interest in reestablishing themselves on Taiwan, much less forcing China to play by Western rules with respect to the island, meant that there was not yet a broader confrontation between the Western and Confucian systems over the Taiwan issue.

Perhaps more importantly, despite expanding administrative control to Taiwan, Chinese attitudes toward the island remained ambivalent and its administration of it haphazard at best. For Qing officials posted to Taiwan “it was a career graveyard,”⁵⁶ an assignment often given to the least qualified and from which advancement was exceedingly difficult. Corruption and civil unrest were endemic, as evidenced by frequent rebellions; some 159 rebellions took place under Qing rule, leading to the saying “every three years an uprising, every five years a rebellion.”⁵⁷ In addition, the poor administrative control that did exist did not extend to the whole island. It was concentrated around the prefectural capital, Tainan, in the southwestern part of the island, with military outposts extending only up to the Ta-chia River in the north and the mountains in the center. As such, less than half of Taiwan was under direct Chinese control, a fact which little disturbed the court. Indeed, while the ‘civilized’ aborigines of the western coastal plains were at least partially incorporated into the Qing tax system,⁵⁸ the government actively sought to maintain

⁵⁵ Davison, *A Short History of Taiwan*, 25.

⁵⁶ Long, *Taiwan*, 13.

⁵⁷ Cited in Roy, *Taiwan*, 21.

⁵⁸ Shepherd, “The Island Frontier of the Ch’ing, 1684-1780,” 109-10.

a barrier between areas of Chinese control and the territories of the island's 'raw' aborigines – “the mountains running through the heart of Taiwan, as well as the territory along the rugged east coast, was considered beyond the boundaries of Han Chinese settlement or economic exploitation.”⁵⁹ The aborigines living there remained independent of Chinese administrative authority.

In addition to the dynasty's limited administrative control, Roy suggests that “the Qing's vacillating emigration policy was emblematic of the lack of vision in Beijing's Taiwan policy.”⁶⁰ While some officials argued in favor of explicit colonization in order to ensure that Taiwan not become a threat to internal security, the view that predominated for a century (excluding a brief period in the 1730s) was that the emigration to the island should be kept to a minimum.⁶¹ To that end, “the court imposed a partial quarantine on the island”⁶² by laying out strict regulations for Chinese emigration to Taiwan. The Three Prohibitions with Regard to Refugees read as follows:

1. Those wishing to migrate to Taiwan must apply from their home villages of registration and submit documents for examination by the branch military circuit intendancy for Taiwan and Xiamen; further investigations will be conducted by the Coastal Defense Magistrate's Office. Severe penalties will be invoked in cases of illegal emigration.
2. Those obtaining permission to migrate may not bring family or friends. Those already on Taiwan should not offer encouragement to friends or relatives to apply for emigration from the mainland.
3. Hakka [an ethnic group] from Chaozhou and Huizhou should not henceforth migrate to Taiwan.⁶³

These restrictions were meant to create “a population of male laborers dependent on the government for access to their families on the mainland,” as well as to minimize potential conflicts between Han settlers and aborigines by discouraging more permanent settlements.⁶⁴

Such restrictions proved incapable of stemming the flow of emigration to the island; Taiwan's Chinese population increased six-fold to almost 840,000.⁶⁵ By the late-18th century, the increasingly

⁵⁹ Davison, *A Short History of Taiwan*, 26.

⁶⁰ Roy, *Taiwan*, 22.

⁶¹ Davison, *A Short History of Taiwan*, 25.

⁶² Shepherd, “The Island Frontier of the Ch'ing, 1684-1780,” 112.

⁶³ Davison, *A Short History of Taiwan*, 26.

⁶⁴ Shepherd, “The Island Frontier of the Ch'ing, 1684-1780,” 112.

⁶⁵ Davison, *A Short History of Taiwan*, 30.

hollow emigration restrictions had to be loosened, though the government did not adopt a policy of unrestricted emigration until 1875.⁶⁶ While the growth of the island's Chinese population, and its subsequent spread to more unsettled areas, forced the geographical scope of government administration to grow with it, the process was slow and grudging. "Clinging to the restrictive immigration policy and endeavoring to appease the aborigines, officials would redraw the quarantine boundaries and expend some effort to minimize further expansion into areas claimed by Taiwan's original inhabitants."⁶⁷ Always the attempt to minimize administrative control was a failure. As a result, the area under Qing authority (ineffective though it was) slowly grew, though much of the eastern part of the island remained outside direct Chinese control. Given China's inability to properly administer even a relatively limited portion of the island, one is forced to agree with Roy's assertion that "the challenge of effectively governing Taiwan was beyond the Qing's ability and commitment."⁶⁸

Chinese Territory or No-Man's Land?: Disputes over Administrative Responsibility

Taiwan's minimal incorporation into the Chinese empire had been a solution of last resort to a practical problem of internal security – a case of simple learning. Its eventual establishment as a Chinese province would come in response to problems relating to China's *external* security – namely, Taiwan as a growing source of contention between it and the Western powers, including Japan. This contention was characterized as much by conflicting norms of sovereignty as by imperialist efforts at territorial aggrandizement. In essence, China's policy towards the aboriginal territories in eastern Taiwan conflicted with Western norms of sovereignty that required actual administrative control of a territory in order for a state's claim to it to be recognized. It was through protracted disputes over China's lack of administrative control of Taiwan that China began to redefine itself as a territorial-state, one accepting the norm, and the consequent responsibility, of state sovereignty – a case of complex learning.

The root of the dispute over Taiwan was China's policy toward the aborigines. The island's natives were categorized by the Chinese as either *sheng fan* ('raw foreigners') or *shu fan* ('ripe

⁶⁶ Shaw, "Modern History of Taiwan," 13.

⁶⁷ Davison, *A Short History of Taiwan*, 30.

⁶⁸ Roy, *Taiwan*, 20.

foreigners'). The former were semi-nomadic, living in more remote mountainous areas of the island, and often engaged in practices seen by the Chinese as uncivilized (e.g., head-hunting). The latter, while still considered barbarians, were more settled, had greater interaction with Chinese settlers, and had thus become more assimilated. It was this latter group that was at least partially administered by the prefectural government on Taiwan, while the raw aborigines remained outside of China's direct control.⁶⁹ This was fully in line with Confucian norms of statecraft. Although practical needs of administration and defense might require the incorporation of some non-Chinese into the boundaries of the empire, it was unnecessary to seek out barbarians to actively civilize. "The Chinese policy toward [them] was one of 'laissez-faire,' expecting them to gradually and voluntarily seek assimilation" due to China's inherent cultural superiority.⁷⁰ Until they came to realize this fact, Taiwan's raw aborigines could be "left undisturbed to continue with their 'uncivilized' habits."⁷¹

It was this policy of leaving the inhabitants of the unsettled portions of the island to their own devices that would become a source of tension between China and the West. What made this a political issue was a series of incidents involving the killing by aborigines of crews from foreign ships that sank off the Taiwanese coast. As trade with China increased after the Opium War, and particularly after the Treaty of Tianjin (1858) opened treaty ports on the island, so did the problem of shipwrecks. The first case to receive international attention⁷² was that of the British ship *Larpen*, which wrecked off the southeast coast of Taiwan in 1850. In May 1851, three survivors from the *Larpen* were rescued and told of their capture by aborigines and enslavement by Chinese settlers. A second major incident occurred in March 1867, when the US ship *Rover* sank after it struck rocks near the southern tip of Taiwan. All but one of the survivors that made it to shore were killed by local aborigines. The third such incident occurred in December 1871, when a group of fishermen from the Ryukyu islands met a similar fate. In

⁶⁹ Shepherd, "The Island Frontier of the Ch'ing, 1684-1780," 110.

⁷⁰ Yen, *Taiwan in China's Foreign Relations, 1836-1874*, 16.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 16.

⁷² It should be noted that earlier disputes regarding the treatment of shipwrecked foreign sailors occurred during the Opium War, but involved China's treatment of foreign prisoners, not the behavior of Taiwan's aborigines. See Yen, *Taiwan in China's Foreign Relations, 1836-1874*, 27-43; and George Williams Carrington, *Foreigners in Formosa, 1841-1874* (San Francisco: Chinese Materials Center, Inc., 1977), 25-49.

each of these cases, the essential problem was the same – a lack of Chinese control over the eastern portion of Taiwan, as well as ambiguous Chinese claims to the territory in question, that led to debate regarding its territorial status as part of China.

The uncertainty over the status of the eastern half of Taiwan began shortly after the *Larpen* incident. Anxious to ascertain the fate of other lost vessels, the British sent a ship to investigate the situation on Taiwan. Its conclusion was

that the Chinese could not be depended upon to assist in the release of captive foreigners, or to transmit any information regarding them, for the southern and eastern parts of Taiwan were not formally incorporated into the administrative units of the prefecture. The areas near which the ships often met trouble were inhabited by the aborigines of Taiwan. The lack of communication, because of the high mountain range that divided the island in two as well as the lack of roads between the two areas, and the absence of contact between officials and the inhabitants of the aboriginal territory made it impossible to obtain from the Chinese government any news of occurrences in southern and eastern Taiwan.⁷³

American and Prussian observers made similar assessments over the next several years. To Western eyes, the absence of administrative control of these portions of Taiwan brought into question the extent of China's sovereignty over the island.

The apparent lack of Chinese sovereignty over the eastern half of Taiwan resulted in a great deal of interest on the part of some Westerners in obtaining control of it for their own governments. American, British, and Prussian interests all sought to establish a foothold on the island, justifying their plans on the premise that it was a no-man's land available to anyone for exploitation. Moreover, they often believed that China would not mind foreign incursions into barbarian territory, and might even welcome them. For instance, American Commodore Mathew Perry (who successfully forced Japan to open to Western trade in 1854) felt that if the United States established an outpost on Taiwan, "the Chinese could be benefitted from the protection of the settlers against pirates and rebels who infested the island."⁷⁴ In most cases, foreign designs on Taiwan came largely from private individuals, not their

⁷³ Yen, *Taiwan in China's Foreign Relations, 1836-1874*, 51-2.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 54.

governments, and thus were rarely acted upon.⁷⁵ For instance, despite the interest of Perry and others in including Taiwan as part of America's manifest destiny, the US government gave the idea of acquiring any part of the island little attention.⁷⁶ However, foreign powers, discouraged by China's seeming unwillingness to act to protect foreigners wrecked on Taiwan's shores, did occasionally send punitive expeditions against local aborigines, usually without much success.

Far from helping to clarify the situation, China gave conflicting signals about its dominion over the areas in question. On the one hand, it laid claim to the entire island. When it became known that foreign traders had set up an operation to harvest camphor trees on aboriginal territory, the Zongli Yamen (China's proto-Foreign Ministry) made it clear to representatives of the governments whose citizens were involved that "the territories inhabited by the aboriginal tribes [are] within Chinese territory. Ta-nan-ao..., where the foreigners settled, is not a treaty port; foreigners are not permitted to enter that territory to rent land from the aborigines or cultivate land there; the land is not for the aborigines to rent at their will."⁷⁷ The venture was ended at China's insistence.⁷⁸ Perhaps recognizing the inherent contradictions between Chinese policy and the Western norms of sovereignty that would later result in a major crisis, the Zongli Yamen gave the following warning to local officials during the *Rover* case:

Although the uncivilized aborigines are not bound by our law, their land is still part of Chinese territory. To prevent foreign ambition, it is advised that during the debate with the U.S. Consul (LeGendre), our officials can not refer to the view that the aboriginal territory is beyond the Chinese imperial domain.⁷⁹

The Chinese government also protested against unilateral attempts by foreign powers to punish aborigines for attacks on their sailors, such as a failed US attempt in June 1867 to seek retribution for the *Rover*.⁸⁰

⁷⁵ A notable exception was an effort in the late-1860s by private traders to set up an operation to harvest camphor trees on aboriginal territory, complete with a fortification manned by local settlers. See Yen, *Taiwan in China's Foreign Relations, 1836-1874*, 106-07.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 55-6.

⁷⁷ Cited in Yen, *Taiwan in China's Foreign Relations, 1836-1874*, 108.

⁷⁸ It should be noted that the actions taken by the British government in this matter were more out of concern for the state of Sino-British relations than from a belief in China's sovereignty over the region in question. See Yen, *Taiwan in China's Foreign Relations, 1836-1874*, 108-09.

⁷⁹ Cited in Lung-chih Chang, "From Island Frontier to Imperial Colony: Qing and Japanese Sovereignty Debates and Territorial Projects in Taiwan, 1874-1906" (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 2003), 43.

⁸⁰ Yen, *Taiwan in China's Foreign Relations, 1836-1874*, 130-31.

On the other hand, the Chinese disavowed any control over the island's aboriginal inhabitants. When the local authorities reported to the imperial court about the *Rover* incident, they pointed out that "the area of K'uei-lei [where the incident took place] is not yet cultivated and is an inaccessible jungle where people seldom visit and is not yet incorporated in our territorial map; (the area) is also sealed off by the imperial practice so that unnecessary loss of precious life (at the hands of the savages) could be prevented."⁸¹ Despite warnings from the Zongli Yamen, similar statements were made in a letter to the American consul at Amoy, Charles LeGendre, stating that "the Americans were not murdered on Chinese territory, or on Chinese Seas, but in a region occupied by the Savages."⁸² When the Japanese sent a punitive expedition to aboriginal territory in 1874 (to be discussed shortly), the Taiwan Circuit Intendant, Xia Xianlun, responded that "if the Japanese approach our central region, we will defend it with our troops and local militia. If they only seek revenge on the aborigines, we should keep alert and reason with them according to the Sino-Japanese treaty."⁸³ The Minzhe Governor-General, Li Henian, made a similar point.⁸⁴ As far as local officials were concerned, the Qing policy on Taiwan precluded them from taking action in the aboriginal territories since it was not under their direct administration.⁸⁵

Lung-chih Chang suggests that the central government in Beijing had a very different perspective, noting a reprimand of local inaction to Japanese incursions into aboriginal territory:

The aboriginal territory has long been part of the Chinese domain. Its interdependence with the Taiwan prefecture is like the relation between the lips and the teeth. The foreign nations coveted the territory since the opening of commerce. Japan is especially close to the territory and might intend to occupy it....The Taiwan Circuit is oblivious of the priorities and irresponsible to consider the conflict in the aboriginal territory as unstoppable.⁸⁶

⁸¹ Cited in Yen, *Taiwan in China's Foreign Relations, 1836-1874*, 128.

⁸² Cited in Yen, *Taiwan in China's Foreign Relations, 1836-1874*, 131.

⁸³ Cited in Chang, *From Island Frontier to Imperial Colony*, 63.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 63-4.

⁸⁵ Of course, it should be pointed out that such a position would have probably been in the interest of local officials, relinquishing them of any responsibility in the matter.

⁸⁶ Cited in Chang, *From Island Frontier to Imperial Colony*, 64.

The court also stated that “it is forbidden to use the pretext of differences between the aboriginal territory and the central region to allow the Japanese [to] act at will.”⁸⁷ This would seem to indicate that the discrepancy over Taiwan’s status was merely a misunderstanding between local officials and the court, or of local officials trying to shirk their responsibilities. However, as demonstrated by the following exchange that took place between officials of the Zongli Yamen and the Japanese Foreign Ministry on June 21, 1873, less than a year before the Japanese expedition, and which is repeated here at length, the central government was itself less than clear about Taiwan’s status as Chinese territory:

Japanese: Formosa had formerly been occupied by the Japanese and the Dutch, and afterwards Teiseiko [Koxinga] established his independence there. Under his descendents, however, the island became Chinese territory, but China subdued only a portion of the island, leaving the eastern portion to the aboriginal savage tribes, which your Government never attempted to reduce to obedience. Now, in the winter of 1871 these barbarians attacked and murdered the Japanese subjects shipwrecked on the coast, and the Japanese government intends to send an expeditionary force to chastise them. But as the region lies adjacent to the territory under the local government of China, the Ambassador [Soyeshima Taneomi] thought it better to inform you of the fact, in order to avoid a collision endangering amity between the two empires.

Chinese: We have only heard of the Formosan savages plundering and killing the people of Liukiu [Ryukyu islands], but never heard of their attacking Japanese. Liukiu is a Chinese territory, and Chinese officers rescued and sent home to Liukiu such of them as could escape the savages.

Japanese: Liukiu has always belonged to Japan. During the feudal ages it was a dependency of the Prince of Satsuma, and is now under the direct rule of the Imperial Government. Hence, there is not a person of Liukiu who is not a Japanese subject, entitled to the protection of the Japanese Government. You say you have rescued the Liukiu people, but what have you done towards chastising the Formosan savages that have plundered and killed the rest?

Chinese: There are two sorts of aborigines in Formosa – those that have come under the Chinese rule, and are governed by the Chinese local officers, called the ‘ripe barbarians,’ and those that remain beyond the influence of China, called ‘the raw aborigines.’

Japanese: The Formosan savages have molested foreign subjects more than once, and your government never chastised them. This might lead to a very serious consequence – namely the occupation of Formosa by other Powers, as in the case of Cambodia, Tonquin, and Amur districts, which is inconvenient, and a source of danger both of Japan and China. Hence the Japanese Government has decided to undertake the work of chastisement itself. But in order to avoid complications our Ambassador, in his capacity of Minister of Foreign Affairs, caused the expedition to be postponed until he had opportunity to assure the Chinese Government that what Japan is going to do in Formosa

⁸⁷ Cited in Chang, *From Island Frontier to Imperial Colony*, 64-5.

concerns only the barbarians outside the limit of Chinese administration, and that it is no intention of hers to interfere with the internal affairs of China. It is also to be taken into consideration that, if the Japanese Government does not act now, the Japanese public, much angered as they are at the murder of the Liukiu people, might invade the island of their own accord, and thereby give rise to a state of things incompatible with the existing treaty. The Japanese Government was originally against the idea of informing the Chinese Government of their intention, and it is therefore on his own responsibility that the Ambassador makes the present communications, etc.

Chinese: 'The raw aborigines' have not been chastised, because they are beyond the reach of our government and culture; but as we have in our hands the reports of the Governor-General of Fukien [Fujian], who rescued the Liukiu people, we will consult those papers, and then answer your questions.

Japanese: You have already stated that the raw aborigines are beyond the reach of your government and culture; and they are traditionally an independent tribe; and we shall treat them as an independent nation. There is not a Japanese ignorant of the murder of the Liukiu People in Formosa, as the incident has appeared in the Chinese journals; and as the Ambassador is preparing with all haste for his departure, he will certainly not wait for any later response.⁸⁸

Beyond the dispute over the Ryukyus,⁸⁹ what is clear from this exchange is that the Chinese government did not see the eastern part of Taiwan as within the administrative jurisdiction of the Chinese empire. While there may have been some recognition that such policies could result in foreign claims, China did not seem ready to stake an unambiguous claim to the entire island. Indeed, their use of the same language in referring to the Ryukyus, a *tributary*, as Chinese territory further complicates the question of how China defined the limits of its territory.

Believing that the Chinese government had formally acknowledged that the territory of the raw aborigines did not belong to it, the Japanese proceeded to organize their own punitive expedition in the spring of 1874.⁹⁰ Japan's primary interest in punishing the aborigines for the death of the Ryukyu fishermen was to obtain Chinese recognition of its claim over those islands.⁹¹ However, the creation in April 1874 of a Bureau of Aboriginal Affairs of Taiwan testifies to the Japanese interest in establishing a

⁸⁸ Cited in Yen, *Taiwan in China's Foreign Relations, 1836-1874*, 187-89. The underlined portion of this exchange represents a sentence that does not appear in all translations; see Yen, 353, n. 36.

⁸⁹ The Ryukyus had traditionally maintained an ambiguous relationship with China and Japan, sending tribute to both. Though it was not recognized by China, the islands were formally incorporated into the Japanese empire in October 1872.

⁹⁰ Such an expedition had been under consideration since October 1872. See Carrington, *Foreigners in Formosa*, 282.

⁹¹ Carrington, *Foreigners in Formosa, 1841-1874*, 283.

more permanent presence on Taiwan as well. As Yen suggests, “the planners of the Japanese expedition to Taiwan carefully calculated the steps which would be taken to seek redress for the Ryukyu victims but which would in effect gain a foothold in Taiwan as a preliminary step toward eventual incorporation of Taiwan within the Japanese Empire.”⁹² The Japanese force included three ships and about 3,600 men,⁹³ and landed on the southern tip of Taiwan in May where it proceeded to set up camps and engage in some military actions against local aborigines.⁹⁴

Word of the planned expedition reached the Chinese court on April 18, about two weeks before a Japanese warship bound for Taiwan entered the harbor of Amoy requesting the use of its facilities. It responded by appointing a Special Commissioner for Taiwan Affairs, Shen Baozhen (Shen Pao-chen), and sending him along with troops to the island to ensure its defense. The Zongli Yamen also sent a communiqué to the Japanese Foreign Ministry which read:

The intention of Japan in regard to the Taiwan aborigines in sending off a mission [as understood by China from the June 1873 meeting] was only to desire from them good treatment of her people in future, if they ever go to their territories, and not in any way to wage war upon them....Taiwan is an island lying far off in the sea and we did not yet restrain the aborigines inhabiting it by any legislation nor establish any government over them, following in this a maxim mentioned in Li-chi [The Book of Rites]: Don't change the usage of a people but keep their proper ones. But the territories inhabited by the aborigines are truly within the jurisdiction of China; and this is also the case with several aboriginal groups in other remote provinces within the Chinese Empire....China permits them to preserve their customs....We hear now with astonishment, that Japan intends to send an expeditionary force to Taiwan, but still we do not firmly believe that this is truly the case. If it is true, why did you not consult us first? For what purpose is the ship destined which is now anchored in the harbor of Amoy? Kindly inform us.⁹⁵

While Yen suggests that this first message was relatively weak because it was not “a straightforward note of protest,”⁹⁶ it was the first shot fired in a diplomatic struggle between China and Japan over the status of eastern Taiwan. Though it ended peacefully with a settlement signed on October 31, 1874, the dispute brought the two states to the brink of war.

⁹² Yen, *Taiwan in China's Foreign Relations, 1836-1874*, 301.

⁹³ Robert Gardella, “From Treaty Ports to Provincial Status, 1860-1894,” in *Taiwan: A New History*, ed. Murray A. Rubinstein (Armonk: M. E. Sharpe, 1998), 184.

⁹⁴ Carrington, *Foreigners in Formosa, 1841-1874*, 283-84.

⁹⁵ Cited in Yen, *Taiwan in China's Foreign Relations, 1836-1874*, 217.

⁹⁶ Yen, *Taiwan in China's Foreign Relations, 1836-1874*, 218.

The details of the negotiations are beyond the scope of this dissertation. What is important is the nature of the dispute. China's position that it had possession of the whole island of Taiwan, but that this possession did not extend to direct administrative control over all of its inhabitants, made sense according to Confucian norms of statecraft. However, it conflicted with the Western concept of state sovereignty. Yen argues that the signing of the Treaty of Tianjin, which opened some Taiwanese ports to Western trade, represented "the de facto recognition of China's sovereignty over western Taiwan."⁹⁷ Yet with this recognition came "an obligation to offer protection to foreigners traveling and residing within her Empire."⁹⁸ If China's claim to sovereignty over the whole island of Taiwan was to be accepted by the Western powers, it had to demonstrate its ability (and willingness) to effectively deal with Western concerns over the safety of their ships' crews wrecked on the coast. "Management of such cases necessarily meant that the local mandarins should dispatch punitive expeditions to punish the head-hunting aborigines or that they enforce law and order by extending jurisdictional control over to the aboriginal territory, by erecting forts and building lighthouses, to provide some measure of protection for shipwrecked foreigners."⁹⁹ The inability and/or unwillingness of Chinese officials to meet these obligations of sovereignty called China's claim to the eastern part of Taiwan into question.

It was the failure of China to meet its obligations as a sovereign state that formed the basis of the Japanese argument. In a written statement presented to the Zongli Yamen in September, Japan's chief negotiator, Okubo Toshimichi, focused on the following questions:

1. If your country claims that the aboriginal territory is within your domain then why have you not to this day taken measures to enlighten [civilize] the aborigines? If you do claim it to be your territory, an administrative and educational system must be established there. How much have you done to administer and civilize the aborigines?
2. With the opening of relations among nations throughout the world, people travel widely. Every country has taken steps toward insuring the safety of mariners on its shores. Your country is known throughout the world for high morality and the principle of love and righteousness. One expects from you a generous treatment of shipwrecked foreigners. But, the murder of the foreigner by aborigines has never

⁹⁷ Ibid., 300.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 300.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 300.

received your attention. It is evident that you do not sympathize with foreigners, but you encourage the aborigines in their cruel undertakings. Is this reasonable?¹⁰⁰

The Chinese response explaining its policy of gradually assimilating the aborigines was deemed unsatisfactory.¹⁰¹ For the Japanese, the standard of administrative responsibility in denoting sovereignty was a matter of established international law.¹⁰² If China exercised no such authority over the aboriginal territories, then its claim to them was legally invalid.

In the end, the settlement that ended the dispute essentially forced China to accept full administrative responsibility for the aboriginal territories, stating in Article III that “it will be the duty of the Chinese Government to take such steps for the due control of the savage tribes in the region referred to as will for ever secure the navigation (along their coasts) against any farther atrocities on their part.”¹⁰³ Yen argues that in the dispute over Taiwan, “the Western concept of the state as defined in international law had to give way to the more traditional Chinese system of the universal state with its claim to sovereignty over even unabsorbed regions.”¹⁰⁴ Yet such an interpretation seems unfounded; indeed, the reverse is true. While China’s claim over the eastern portions of Taiwan was recognized despite its failure to administer it in line with international law, this recognition was prefaced on China’s future acceptance of the legal standards of sovereignty. As Yen herself points out, “after the recognition of her sovereignty [over Taiwan] was obtained, China proceeded to fulfill those legal obligations as prescribed in international law.”¹⁰⁵

Toward that end, and as part of its more general effort at Self-Strengthening, the Chinese government pursued an extensive program of modernization on Taiwan, which included “bring[ing] Taiwan’s underdeveloped central mountain belts under Han Chinese settlement and control[ling] those aborigines who stood in the way by suasion if possible, or coercion if necessary.”¹⁰⁶ Forests were cleared

¹⁰⁰ Cited in Yen, *Taiwan in China’s Foreign Relations, 1836-1874*, 254.

¹⁰¹ Yen, *Taiwan in China’s Foreign Relations, 1836-1874*, 256.

¹⁰² Ibid., 261-62.

¹⁰³ Cited in Yen, *Taiwan in China’s Foreign Relations, 1836-1874*, 283.

¹⁰⁴ Yen, *Taiwan in China’s Foreign Relations, 1836-1874*, 295.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 295.

¹⁰⁶ Gardella, “From Treaty Ports to Provincial Status,” 184-85.

for cultivation, new roads and settlements were built in aboriginal territory, and, most importantly, administrative authority was extended over the whole island. Public schools were established for the aborigines in order to assimilate them into Chinese culture.¹⁰⁷ While the long-term success of such efforts may be questionable, their meaning is clear – China now accepted the basic principles of state sovereignty (at least as they related to Taiwan). After Taiwan became a battleground in the Sino-French War (1884-85), the court went further by deciding to make it a Chinese province, which formally occurred in 1887. Taiwan was now fully accepted as sovereign Chinese territory, and China had demonstrated that it was willing to fight to protect that sovereignty.

What the preceding discussion of the evolution of Taiwan's territorial status shows is the complex interplay of security concerns and social learning that went into the constitution of Taiwan as a Chinese interest. The transformation in Chinese identity, from cultural-state to territorial-state, required a fundamental redefinition in its relationship to territory and boundaries, as well as a change in the diplomatic practices through which that relationship was expressed. Allen Carlson argues that a state's territorial boundaries are socially constructed through "three main types of diplomatic and representational practices" – official claims, boundary analysis by elites, and international agreements.¹⁰⁸ While his focus on modern boundary disputes assumes a territorially-defined Chinese state, the same concepts may be applied to understand its development. The ambiguous nature of China's official claims, the conflicting analyses among various observers regarding the region's status, and China's own failure to live up to previous international agreements (as understood by the West) demonstrate diplomatic and representational practices that were in flux as a result of China's on-going transition from cultural-state to territorial-state. This transition could only be completed as these practices converged on a common understanding of China's sovereign boundaries, both what they were and what they meant.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 185.

¹⁰⁸ Allen Carlson, "Constructing the Dragon's Scales: China's Approach to Territorial Sovereignty and Border Relations," in *Chinese Foreign Policy: Pragmatism and Strategic Behavior*, ed. Suisheng Zhao (Armonk: M. E. Sharpe, 2004), 278. Also see Allen Russell Carlson, "Constructing a New Great Wall: Chinese Foreign Policy and the Norm of State Sovereignty" (Ph.D. diss., Yale University, 2000).

The main burden of social learning necessary for such a convergence to occur was placed squarely on the shoulders of China. While the West came to accept that eastern Taiwan was not a no-man's land open for colonization, China had to learn the practices associated with a fundamentally different conception of state in order to earn that acceptance. It had to learn that it could no longer claim sovereignty over 'All under Heaven,' nor could it expect to continue its dealings with other societies over the ill-defined boundaries that the tribute system implied. The new rules of international politics by which China was being forced to play required it to accept the modern concept of sovereignty and the definition of territorial boundaries that came with it. This meant that the boundaries of the newly territorial Chinese state had to be established, almost by trial and error, as China learned what territories were necessary for its security, which could and could not be defended, and, perhaps most importantly, which would be accepted by other actors in the system. While the relative material power of the actors involved played a key role in determining the outcome of this learning process, power alone does not explain the redefinition of Taiwan as Chinese territory that had to be defended, both diplomatically and militarily.

From Chinese Province to Japanese Colony, and Back Again (Almost): Taiwan & the Nationalization of China's Territorial Interests

By all accounts, China has taken its new identity as a modern state to heart. Nathan and Ross suggest that one of the great puzzles of Chinese foreign policy is the fact that "for centuries it placed itself at the core of its own world order, oblivious to the power politics of Europe and the interstate law that it spawned. Today it defends a purist, originally European conception of national sovereignty."¹⁰⁹ China's wholehearted defense of Western notions of sovereignty is certainly ironic given the traditional Confucian world view, but it is less puzzling when one considers the harsh lesson that foreign imperialism taught it – state survival depends on the vigorous defense of one's territorial integrity, defined in Western terms. By the end of the 19th century, China was experiencing "a territorial crisis."¹¹⁰ Its losses of territory and

¹⁰⁹ Nathan and Ross, *The Great Wall and the Empty Fortress*, 3.

¹¹⁰ Hunt, *The Genesis of Chinese Communist Foreign Policy*, 9.

control over treaty ports had accelerated into an unprecedented scramble for concessions among the Great Powers as they sought to carve out their own spheres of influence. Although American pressures to maintain an Open Door policy in China helped to prevent it from being formally colonized, many Chinese intellectuals feared that ‘the Chinese melon’ would soon be sliced up. China thus learned the hard way that territorial integrity mattered.

Given this territorial crisis, and the new identity as a territorial-state it brought about, it should not be surprising that the Western principle of *raison d'état* – i.e., power politics – became a guiding principle of Chinese foreign policy. Indeed, as Thomas Christensen has argued, “China may well be the high church of realpolitik in the post-Cold War world. Its analysts certainly think more like traditional balance-of-power theorists than do most contemporary Western leaders and policy analysts.”¹¹¹ Yet realpolitik can only go so far in explaining the importance of territorial integrity to China’s interests. As Christensen acknowledges, its concern for power politics is mixed with “less antiseptic emotions rooted in China’s bitter history.”¹¹² This is due to the fact that, just as China began to accept its new identity as a territorial-state, it began another phase in its transformation – from territorial-state to nation-state.¹¹³ For a state committed to controlling strategically and economically valuable land that could enhance its security, China’s territorial losses were bad enough. However, the nationalization of China – the association of a territorially-defined Chinese state with the Chinese people – meant that its evolving territorial interests began to take on greater meaning than just land, resources, or more defensible borders; it became the Motherland of the Chinese nation, imbuing it with a new sense of importance. As a result, territorial integrity achieved an emotional significance far beyond the strategic or economic value of the land in question. Losses of territory implied a collective impotence in the face of foreign aggression felt by the whole nation, a sense of national humiliation.

¹¹¹ Thomas J. Christensen, “Chinese Realpolitik,” *Foreign Affairs* 75, no. 5 (September/October 1996): 37.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 40.

¹¹³ It should be made clear that this is not meant to imply that the first stage (i.e., the development of China as a territorial-state) was completed. China would continue to struggle with the norms of the interstate system even as it became ‘nationalized.’

Taiwan as a Symbol of National Humiliation: KMT & CCP Responses to China's Territorial Crisis

The real legacy of China's territorial crisis is not just the physical loss of territory, but "the myth of China's humiliation at the hands of the West and Japan, a myth that gripped the imagination of three generations of Chinese and stung them into even more critical analysis of the international order and Chinese society. The result was an obsession, long sanctioned by official orthodoxy, with expunging the residue of a feudal-imperialist past."¹¹⁴ Of course, as John Garver points out, to call this historical legacy a myth is not to suggest that China did not suffer greatly at the hands of foreign powers. "It is mythic, rather, in the sense that the fact of belief is more important than what actually occurred. The story of National Humiliation is constantly told and retold in Chinese schools, in the mass media, and in countless mandatory study sessions attended by Chinese citizens....The myth of National Humiliation stands at the center of the political culture of the People's Republic of China."¹¹⁵ As Peter Gries puts it, "the 'Century of Humiliation' [from 1840 to 1949] is neither an objective past that works insidiously in the present nor a mere 'invention' of present-day nationalist entrepreneurs. Instead, the 'Century' is a continuously reworked narrative about the past central to the contested and evolving meaning of being 'Chinese' today."¹¹⁶

The importance of this myth becomes readily apparent when we examine the nature of China's territorial claims. China has made numerous territorial claims against its neighbors and former colonizers. Between 1950 and 1990, China had territorial disputes with fourteen of its seventeen neighbors.¹¹⁷ A number of these disputes are ongoing – e.g., Diaoyu (a.k.a., Senkaku), the Paracel Islands, the Spratly Islands, and the Sino-Indian border. China also sought the repatriation of two

¹¹⁴ Hunt, *The Genesis of Chinese Communist Foreign Policy*, 9.

¹¹⁵ John W. Garver, *Foreign Relations of the People's Republic of China* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1993), 7-8.

¹¹⁶ Peter Hays Gries, *China's New Nationalism: Pride, Politics, and Diplomacy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 47.

¹¹⁷ These include Afghanistan, Bhutan, Burma, India, Japan, Malaysia, Nepal, Pakistan, the Philippines, the Soviet Union, Taiwan, and Vietnam. For a brief summary of these disputes, see the appendix in Paul K. Huth, *Standing Your Ground: Territorial Disputes and International Conflict* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1996). China has also had disputes with Brunei and Indonesia which are not listed in Huth.

colonies – Hong Kong from the British, and Macao from Portugal – which were returned to China in 1997 and 1999, respectively. As Chi-kin Lo notes, such claims have driven many observers to argue that “China’s policies towards territorial disputes [are] dictated by insatiable irredentist ambitions.”¹¹⁸ For some China-watchers, that view still holds. Maria Chang has asserted that “Chinese patriotic nationalism is...profoundly irredentist.”¹¹⁹ More alarmist observers have even suggested that China could seek to reclaim its hegemonic status over former tributaries. The Chinese publication in the early-1950s of a history book containing a map of China that included Mongolia and other border regions has lent legitimacy to such claims.¹²⁰

Of course, it should be pointed out that the actual scope of China’s irredentist ambitions is not so clear-cut. As Arthur Huck once pointed out, “it does not follow that any modern Chinese state will want to regain all these ‘lost’ territories in the sense of incorporating them in a new Chinese Empire (whether Communist or not).”¹²¹ Lo argues that despite the scope of its claims, China’s behavior in pursuing them has been fairly moderate.¹²² Similarly, Carlson has argued that China has pursued an increasingly pragmatic policy towards its territorial disputes.¹²³ Indeed, while territorial disputes continue to exist between China and its neighbors, many have been resolved. Others involve relatively small portions of land, often in remote areas where establishing borders is difficult, and as such have received relatively little attention from Chinese policy-makers. Thus, while the pursuit of territorial claims has been an important element of Chinese foreign policy, one should not jump to the conclusion that all such claims are equally likely to produce aggressively irredentist policies.

Indeed, what is particularly interesting about China’s territorial claims is the relatively limited nature of the losses themselves. To be sure, China’s concessions to foreign powers were significant, but

¹¹⁸ Chi-kin Lo, *China’s Policy Towards Territorial Disputes: The Case of the South China Sea Islands* (London: Routledge, 1989), 3.

¹¹⁹ Maria Hsia Chang, *Return of the Dragon: China’s Wounded Nationalism* (Boulder: Westview Press, 2001), 205.

¹²⁰ Lo, *China’s Policy Towards Territorial Disputes*, 3-4.

¹²¹ Arthur Huck, *The Security of China: Chinese Approaches to Problems of War and Strategy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1970), 27.

¹²² Lo, *China’s Policy Towards Territorial Disputes*, 4-7.

¹²³ Carlson, “Constructing the Dragon’s Scales.”

many proved short-lived. Indeed, when one compares the boundaries of the PRC with those of the Qing empire, one is struck by the lack of significant long-term losses of territory. As William Kirby rightly points out, “perhaps the greatest accomplishment of Republican diplomacy” was its success in defending the boundaries of the Qing “to such a degree that the borders of the PRC today are essentially those of the Qing, minus only Outer Mongolia.”¹²⁴ Tibet, Xinjiang, Inner Mongolia, and Manchuria all presented enormous challenges to China’s territorial integrity, but in the end China managed to retain or regain control over all of them. Some of China’s remaining claims (e.g., Diaoyu) would seem to be of comparatively little strategic or economic value, a fact that would seem to contradict its unwillingness to compromise its claims of sovereignty. Even in cases where claims might yield material benefits (e.g., the Spratly’s), the costs of pursuing them are likely to outweigh any benefits for the foreseeable future. While pragmatism may help to explain its reluctance to settle most of them militarily, there appears to be a disconnect between the limited nature of China’s claims and its unwillingness to settle many of them.

This begins to make more sense when one considers the impact that the myth of national humiliation has had on China’s definition of its territorial interests. Shih argues that China’s national identity is defined in terms of “the Chinese nation in its confrontation with an invading imperialist Other.”¹²⁵ As such, its often uncompromising attitude towards territorial concessions “does not imply anything essential about Chinese territoriality being ready to be protected; rather it is some territorially based anti-foreignism that produces and reproduces nationalist narratives for the citizens of the new Republic.”¹²⁶ In essence, it is not the size, strategic or economic value of missing territories that is necessarily important, but the weight of China’s past weakness on the collective memory of the Chinese nation that such territories represent. As a result, China’s territorial demands, and its actions supporting them, can appear to have a somewhat schizophrenic quality. As Shih puts it, “when the Chinese need to signal their willingness to sacrifice for the cause of nationalism, the national defense of a seemingly

¹²⁴ William C. Kirby, “The Internationalization of China: Foreign Relations at Home and Abroad in the Republican Era,” *The China Quarterly* 150 (June 1997): 437.

¹²⁵ Shih, *Navigating Sovereignty*, 46.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 57.

worthless land may become absolute; the occasional casualness, on the other hand, implies China's transcendence over the secular issue of state sovereignty. Sacrifice as well as transcendence stress humanity and morality over territorial integrity."¹²⁷ Thus, it is not territorial integrity for its own sake that China pursues, but territorial integrity as a way to purge all signs of its historical weakness. As Shih argues, "a deeper reading [of China's concept of national defense] may indicate that the state is never as important as the nation and territorial sovereignty rarely is more important than the unity of the Chinese people."¹²⁸

From this perspective, it is not Taiwan's value as an 'unsinkable aircraft carrier' or an economic asset that fuels China's desire to reclaim the island; it is the fact that Taiwan represents the last major symbol of national humiliation at the hands of imperialist powers. Indeed, the loss of Taiwan to Japan after the first Sino-Japanese War (1894-95) would come to represent a particularly cruel twist of fate – less than a decade after its incorporation as a Chinese province, it was stripped away by a state that the Chinese had always looked down upon and that would brutalize China a few decades later.¹²⁹ As such, Christensen has suggested that "Taiwan combines all the worst lessons of the century of humiliation for China."¹³⁰ It thus provides an excellent case for examining how the nationalization of China's interests has affected its foreign policy behavior.

Before doing so, however, it is necessary to address a certain level of ambiguity that existed in Chinese attitudes toward the loss of Taiwan during the Republican period (1911-49).¹³¹ It has been argued that neither the Guomindang [Kuomintang (KMT), a.k.a, the Chinese Nationalists] nor the CCP had shown much interest in the recovery of Taiwan until the early-1940s. In his second lecture on nationalism on February 3, 1924, Dr. Sun Yat-sen lamented the tremendous loss of territory, including

¹²⁷ Ibid., 57.

¹²⁸ Ibid., 72.

¹²⁹ For a discussion of Chinese attitudes towards Japan prior to 1895, see Samuel C. Chu, "China's Attitudes toward Japan at the Time of the Sino-Japanese War," in *The Chinese and the Japanese: Essays in Political and Cultural Interactions*, ed. Akira Iriye (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980).

¹³⁰ Thomas J. Christensen, "Pride, Pressure, and Politics: The Roots of China's Worldview," in *In the Eyes of the Dragon: China Views the World*, ed. Yong Deng and Fei-ling Wang (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 1999), 243.

¹³¹ Jon W. Huebner, "The Abortive Liberation of Taiwan," *The China Quarterly* 110 (June 1987): 257.

Taiwan, to the foreign powers.¹³² Yet as Frank Hsiao and Lawrence Sullivan point out, Taiwan is listed along with Korea, Vietnam, and Burma, implying that it was not seen as specifically *Chinese* territory.¹³³ Similarly, they interpret statements by Chiang Kai-shek in his 1938 speech on the ‘Anti-Japanese Resistance War and the Future of Our Party’ as meaning that the KMT leader “was more concerned with ‘restoring’...the independence and freedom of Taiwan *and* Korea so as to create buffer states against Japan, while China would assume traditional protection, but not necessarily sovereignty, over Taiwan and Korea.”¹³⁴ In essence, they suggest that Taiwan was no longer considered Chinese territory due to the cultural differences that developed during decades of Japanese colonial rule.¹³⁵ It was not until shortly before the Cairo Conference in 1943, during which the Allies promised to return Taiwan to China, that Chiang publicly called for its return.

Early communist documents indicate a similar attitude within the CCP. The “Resolution on the Nationality Problem” accepted at the CCPs Sixth National Congress in Moscow in 1928 regarded the Taiwanese living in Fujian as a national minority, like Mongols, Tibetans, and Uighurs. Statements made at the time calling for the return of Shandong and Manchuria from Japanese control did not include Taiwan.¹³⁶ Indeed, the CCP acknowledged that the goal of liberating Taiwan from Japanese imperialism would be the task of a separate struggle led by the Taiwanese Communist Party (TCP), established in 1928 as a branch of the Japanese Communist Party (JCP).¹³⁷ Furthermore, Hsiao and Sullivan point out that “the CCP never referred to the Taiwanese as ‘brethren’ (*dixiong*), or ‘the offspring of the Yellow Emperor,’ or ‘compatriots’ (*tongbao*), who would *de facto* belong to the Han after they return to

¹³² Sun Yat-sen, “Political Oppression and Economic Oppression,” in *The Triple Demism of Sun Yat-sen*, trans. and ann. Paschal M. D’Elia (New York: AMS Press, 1974), 92-5.

¹³³ Frank S. T. Hsiao, and Lawrence R. Sullivan, “The Chinese Communist Party and the Status of Taiwan, 1928-1943,” *Pacific Affairs* 52 (Fall 1979): 462.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, 463.

¹³⁵ It should be pointed out that this view seems couched in a decidedly culturalist interpretation of Chinese ideas that, in the author’s opinion, may not be appropriate given the growth in nationalism evident at the time. However, a full analysis of this issue is beyond the scope of this dissertation. See Hsiao and Sullivan, “The Chinese Communist Party and the Status of Taiwan,” 458-60.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 447-48.

¹³⁷ For a detailed account of the short-lived TCP, see Frank S. T. Hsiao and Lawrence R. Sullivan, “A Political History of the Taiwanese Communist Party, 1928-1931,” *Journal of Asian Studies* 42 (February 1983): 269-89.

China.”¹³⁸ Statements made by Mao in an interview with Edgar Snow on July 16, 1936 seem to support the view that the CCP did not see Taiwan as Chinese territory that had to be reclaimed:

Question [Snow]: ‘Is it the immediate task of the Chinese people to regain all the territories lost to Japanese imperialism, or only to drive Japan from North China, and all Chinese territory beyond the Great Wall?’

Answer [Mao]: ‘It is the immediate task of China to regain all of our lost territories, not merely to defend our sovereignty south of the Great Wall. This means that Manchuria must be regained. We do not, however, include Korea, formerly a Chinese colony, but when we have re-established the independence of the lost territories of China, and if the Koreans wish to break away from the chains of Japanese imperialism, we will extend them our enthusiastic help in their struggle for independence. *The same thing applies for Taiwan.*’¹³⁹

Communist policy regarding Taiwan did not change until the 1943 Cairo Declaration made it politically expedient to treat the island as Chinese territory.¹⁴⁰

The evidence outlined above would seem to be enough to conclude that Nationalists and Communists alike did not consider the recovery of Taiwan to be an issue of vital importance to the Chinese nation. If that were indeed the case, then the construction of Taiwan as a vital ‘national’ interest to China would represent a later application of its new nationalist identity. However, such conclusions would be premature.¹⁴¹ First, regardless of whether either side felt that Taiwan represented lost Chinese territory that must be repatriated in order to remove the stain of foreign imperialism, China had far bigger issues of national sovereignty with which to contend. Prior to the Republican revolution of 1911, Chinese nationalists were primarily concerned with the overthrow of the Qing dynasty. After that task was successfully completed, China was faced with the enormous task of creating a new political system, the difficulty of which was compounded by a severe lack of central authority that eventually led to warlordism. The consolidation of power in the hands of the KMT did not fully solve this problem; it still had to contend with challenges to its authority, particularly from the communists, and had yet to regain

¹³⁸ Hsiao and Sullivan, “The Chinese Communist Party and the Status of Taiwan,” 448.

¹³⁹ Edgar Snow, *Red Star Over China*, First Revised and Enlarged Edition (New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1968), 110; emphasis added.

¹⁴⁰ Hsiao and Sullivan, “The Chinese Communist Party and the Status of Taiwan,” 465.

¹⁴¹ It should be noted that even if Taiwan was constructed much later as a Chinese territorial interest, and an example of China’s humiliation at the hands of Western powers, this would merely alter the timeline, not the overall argument.

direct control of various frontier territories. Throughout the Republican period, the government had to fight hard to counter challenges to its territorial integrity in places like Tibet, Xinjiang, and Manchuria.¹⁴² These challenges culminated in a second devastating war with Japan in 1937. In essence, one might argue that China simply had ‘bigger fish to fry’ than to make the recovery of Taiwan much of a priority. Indeed, Hsiao and Sullivan tacitly acknowledge that “confronted with domestic chaos and an ever stronger and more aggressive Japan, [KMT leaders] realized that China could not hope to ‘recover’ Taiwan and Korea as sovereign territory.”¹⁴³

Second, Nationalist statements regarding Taiwan are less clear-cut than Hsiao and Sullivan make out. Although Sun does seem to list the loss of Taiwan along with that of Korea, his list of China’s territorial losses is organized chronologically, not according to any order of importance. While one might expect greater emphasis on Chinese territories than former tributaries, the lack of stronger statements regarding Taiwan should not be taken as definitive proof of the KMT’s disinterest in it. A stronger case for viewing Taiwan as an early Chinese national interest can be made by examining Chiang’s statements more closely. Hsiao and Sullivan focus on the following passage in his 1938 speech to support their assertion that what the KMT sought was independence for Taiwan: “we must restore the independence and freedom of the brethren in Korea and Taiwan so as to solidify the defense of the Republic of China.”¹⁴⁴ However, earlier in the speech Chiang states “as Korea was originally our vassal country, *so was Taiwan our Chinese territory*; geographically they are on the life line of China.”¹⁴⁵ Thus, while Korea and Taiwan may be equated in the sense that they both had close relationships with China and both suffered from Japanese imperialism, he clearly distinguishes Taiwan as belonging to China. In addition, Chiang saw little ethnic distinction between Chinese and Taiwanese, pointing out that Taiwan had been

¹⁴² For a discussion of China’s diplomatic efforts to maintain international recognition of its claims to these areas, see Kirby, “The Internationalization of China,” 437-39.

¹⁴³ Hsiao and Sullivan, “The Chinese Communist Party and the Status of Taiwan,” 464.

¹⁴⁴ Cited in Hsiao and Sullivan, “The Chinese Communist Party and the Status of Taiwan,” 463. Emphasis was added to the passage in the source, but is removed here.

¹⁴⁵ Cited in Hsiao and Sullivan, “The Chinese Communist Party and the Status of Taiwan,” 463; emphasis added.

settled by the Han, and even asserting that differences between the various national minorities in China were “due not to diversity in race or blood but to dissimilarity in creed and geographical environment.”¹⁴⁶

What then explains the relative scarcity of statements calling for the return of Taiwan? One possible explanation is that both the Nationalists and the Communists were forced to operate under certain international constraints. As already mentioned, KMT diplomacy was faced with the challenging task of “defending the Republic’s far-flung and militarily indefensible borders.”¹⁴⁷ It did so by seeking to prevent international recognition for the independence of various border areas, a policy that Kirby has referred to as the ‘non-recognition doctrine.’¹⁴⁸ In most cases, this strategy was quite successful. However, it could not be applied to the case of Taiwan because China had formally recognized its transfer to Japanese sovereignty through the Treaty of Shimonoseki (1895). As such, Xiaoyuan Liu suggests that the Nationalists were unable to treat Taiwan in the same terms as Manchuria because of the difference in legal status. Indeed, Republican efforts to gain diplomatic support might have been undermined if it had attempted to abrogate the treaty. Once the Sino-Japanese War started in 1937, such concerns began to lose their importance and Chiang began to openly advocate the return of Taiwan; all Sino-Japanese treaties were nullified by the Chinese government’s formal declaration of war on December 9, 1941. In addition, the KMT began to develop organizational components for Taiwan affairs even before the Cairo Declaration, including the Preparatory Office of the KMT for a Regional Branch of Taiwan.¹⁴⁹

Since it had never recognized the legitimacy of the Treaty of Shimonoseki, the CCP did not have the same legal constraints as the KMT. However, it was constrained by the international communist movement led by the Soviet Union. Hunt argues that while it often tried to hedge its support, the CCP generally followed the Soviet line regarding self-determination for China’s nationalities. As he points out, “a weak and dependent party could not...always evade Comintern expectations, especially where the

¹⁴⁶ Chiang Kai-shek, *China’s Destiny*, trans. Wang Chung-hui (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1947), 13.

¹⁴⁷ Kirby, “The Internationalization of China,” 437.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 438.

¹⁴⁹ Xiaoyuan Liu, *A Partnership for Disorder: China, the United States, and Their Policies for the Postwar Disposition of the Japanese Empire, 1941-1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 64-5. For the text of China’s formal declaration of war against Japan, see *China and the Question of Taiwan: Documents and Analysis*, ed. Hungdah Chiu (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1973), 204.

interests of the USSR were involved.”¹⁵⁰ Like its earlier decision to recognize the independence of Outer Mongolia, the CCPs decision to treat the liberation of Taiwan as a separate revolutionary struggle was essentially forced on it by its Soviet patrons.¹⁵¹ Hsiao and Sullivan acknowledge as much when they point out that the divisions within the TCP over whether they should be organized under the auspices of the CCP or the JCP were settled by orders from the Comintern.¹⁵² A more accurate statement of early communist interest in Taiwan may be from one of the founders of the CCP, Li Dazhao (Li Ta-chao), who stated in a lecture at Peking University on May 13, 1924 that “all citizens who participate in a common history and culture, whether they be united or not from a political and juridical point of view, can be considered as belonging to a same nation. For example, even though the people of Taiwan are today subjected to the Japanese government, their history and culture are similar to ours, and therefore they cannot be separated from the Chinese nation.”¹⁵³ Even Mao’s ‘support’ for the self-determination of China’s nationalities was predicated on the belief that they would choose to remain part of China.¹⁵⁴ Thus, for Nationalists and Communists alike, Taiwan was part of the legacy of China’s humiliation at the hands of foreign powers, a territory lost to the Chinese nation that had to be restored.

Type Identity & the Parameters of Foreign Policy Behavior: Power, Politics, & ‘National’ Interest in Chinese Actions Toward Taiwan

On October 1, 1949, Mao Zedong announced to the world the establishment of the People’s Republic of China by declaring that “the Chinese people have stood up.” Yet while China had finally stood up, it did so on only one foot; Taiwan remained beyond the grasp of Communist authority as it became the last redoubt of the defeated KMT. While the CCP would manage to consolidate its power over China by ‘liberating’ Tibet, Hainan, and other territories, US actions in 1950 to neutralize the

¹⁵⁰ Hunt, *The Genesis of Chinese Communist Foreign Policy*, 120.

¹⁵¹ This helps to account for the fact that the KMT has never officially given up its claim to Outer Mongolia. See “Devil May Care,” *The Economist*, 20 March 2004), 42.

¹⁵² Hsiao and Sullivan, “A Political History of the Taiwanese Communist Party,” 270-71. For a more thorough discussion of the Comintern’s relationship with the CCP, see Richard C. Thornton, *The Comintern and the Chinese Communists, 1928-1931* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1969).

¹⁵³ Cited in Hélène Carrère d’Encausse, and Stuart R. Schram, *Marxism and Asia: An Introduction with Readings* (Baltimore: Penguin Books, Inc., 1969), 219.

¹⁵⁴ David Michael Deal, “National Minority Policy in Southwest China, 1911-1965” (Ph.D. diss., University of Washington, 1971).

Taiwan Strait in response to the Korean War prevented a similar result for Taiwan.¹⁵⁵ Since then, “Taiwan’s aloofness [has represented] a double political challenge to the CCP: the island [is] not only a formerly Chinese-administered territory that had been lost to foreign imperialism, but it also sheltered the KMT government, thereby denying the Communists their complete victory in the Chinese Civil War.”¹⁵⁶ As a result, Taiwan has remained the single most important territorial claim of China. Zhu De (Chu Teh), the founder of the PLA, once said that “as long as Taiwan is not liberated, the Chinese people’s historical humiliation is not washed away; as long as the motherland is not reunited, our people’s armed forces’ responsibility is not fulfilled.”¹⁵⁷ Premier Zhou Enlai (Chou En-lai) stated in his report to the First National People’s Congress on September 23, 1954:

The Government of the People’s Republic of China has repeatedly stated that Taiwan is China’s sacred and inviolable territory and that no United States infringement or occupation will be tolerated. Our compatriots on Taiwan...have always been members of the great Chinese family of nationalities and their enslavement by the United States will never be tolerated. The liberation of Taiwan is China’s sovereign right and internal affair and no interference by any foreign country will be tolerated. Both the Cairo Declaration and the Potsdam Declaration, to which the United States is a signatory, affirm that Taiwan is Chinese territory; no perfidious violation of these solemn international agreements by the United States is permitted....all proposals to place Taiwan under United Nations trusteeship or under neutral mandate, or to ‘neutralize’ Taiwan or to create a so-called ‘independent Taiwan state,’ are attempts to carve up China’s territory, enslave the Chinese people on Taiwan and legalize United States occupation of Taiwan. None of this will be tolerated by the Chinese people.¹⁵⁸

While the specific rhetoric has changed over time as ideology has given way to reform, the essential Chinese position has not – Taiwan and its people are an integral part of the Chinese nation from the standpoint of both history and international law, outside interference cannot be tolerated in China’s handling of its domestic affairs, and the United States, in particular, should refrain from attempting to prevent Taiwan’s rightful reunification with the motherland.

¹⁵⁵ For a detailed account of Chinese plans to liberate Taiwan prior to US intervention, see Huebner, “The Abortive Liberation of Taiwan.”

¹⁵⁶ Roy, *Taiwan*, 9.

¹⁵⁷ Cited in Denny Roy, “Tensions in the Taiwan Strait,” *Survival* 42, no. 1 (Spring 2000): 79.

¹⁵⁸ “Document 41: PRC Premier Chou En-lai’s Report on the Work of the Government to the First Session of the First National People’s Congress, September 23, 1954,” in *China and the Question of Taiwan: Documents and Analysis*, ed. Hungdah Chiu (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1973), 249.

Yet while Taiwan has remained a vital national interest to China, the actions it has taken in pursuit of this interest have varied greatly depending on China's strategic environment and domestic political conditions. As various observers have pointed out, the basic pattern of Chinese policy toward Taiwan has been one of oscillation between bellicosity and conciliation.¹⁵⁹ Thus, while China's type identity as a nation-state, defined in terms of its humiliation at the hands of foreign powers, has constituted the recovery of Taiwan as a vital national interest, this does not mean that nationalism (at least in the macro-structural sense) will produce any specific policy response – e.g., conflict. As Suisheng Zhao suggests, “although nationalism has set the rhetoric and perhaps the bottom line of Beijing's sovereignty claim over Taiwan, Beijing's policy has been constructed based on prudence.”¹⁶⁰ In other words, nationalism sets the basic parameters of Chinese foreign policy behavior by determining Chinese interests – i.e., what China wants. However, it is necessary to consider the intersection of identity, power, and politics in order to understand how China behaves within those parameters. By doing so, we may be able to determine how broad those parameters are, and thus what the limits are of a macro-structural approach to nationalism and conflict. As such, this section will provide a basic overview of the PRCs efforts to reclaim Taiwan, with particular emphasis on the 1995-96 Taiwan Strait crisis.

During the 1950s, it was bellicosity that predominated in Chinese policy toward Taiwan, leading to two major crises in the Taiwan Strait. The first took place between September 1954 and March 1955. With the Korean War (1950-53) over, China turned its attention to Taiwan, with Zhou Enlai declaring on August 11, 1954 China's intention to “struggle to the end to fulfill the glorious task of liberating Taiwan.”¹⁶¹ This was, at least in part, an attempt to discourage the United States from signing a defense treaty with Taiwan.¹⁶² China proceeded to amass military forces in Fujian and on September 3 began to shell the offshore island of Jinmen (Quemoy), which was still under Nationalist control, with artillery.

¹⁵⁹ Long, *Taiwan*, 123-24; Suisheng Zhao, “Chinese Nationalism and Beijing's Taiwan Policy: A China Threat?,” *Issues & Studies* 36, no. 1 (January/February 2000): 90.

¹⁶⁰ Zhao, “Chinese Nationalism and Beijing's Taiwan Policy,” 94.

¹⁶¹ Cited in Hungdah Chiu, “China, the United States, and the Question of Taiwan,” in *China and the Question of Taiwan: Documents and Analysis*, ed. Hungdah Chiu (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1973), 113.

¹⁶² Allen S. Whiting, “China's Use of Force, 1950-96, and Taiwan,” *International Security* 26, no. 2 (Fall 2001): 108.

This escalated into a number of coastal battles between Communist and Nationalist forces that spread to involve other offshore islands held by the Nationalists – Mazu (Matsu), Dachen (Tachen), and Nanchi. China's efforts at discouraging a formal alliance between the United States and Taiwan backfired, with the signing of a Mutual Defense Treaty (December 2, 1954) that came into force on March 3, 1955. Although the United States pressured Taiwan to evacuate Dachen and Nanchi, providing a minor victory for the PRC, its suggestion of the possibility of assisting Taiwan in the defense of Jinmen and Mazu resulted in the suspension of hostilities by the end of March. Throughout the crisis, China rebuffed diplomatic efforts to allow outside mediation.

Despite its position that Taiwan represented 'sacred' Chinese territory, China responded to growing US commitments to the defense of Taiwan by stating its willingness to pursue the 'peaceful liberation' of the island. It opened up diplomatic discussions with the United States and appealed to the KMT's sense of nationalism to return to the motherland. These efforts led nowhere, however, and military actions resumed on August 23, 1958 as the PRC once again began shelling Jinmen. The United States reiterated its intention to aid in the defense of Taiwan, including its offshore islands. Although Sino-US talks continued during most of this second crisis, China's shelling of Jinmen continued until it declared a unilateral ceasefire on October 5, resuming again on October 20. A few days later, on October 25, Defense Minister Peng Dehuai (P'eng Teh-huai) announced a 'ceasefire' in which China would only shell Nationalist installations on Jinmen on even days of the calendar.¹⁶³ While this policy of alternate-day shelling would continue until 1979, "the PRC quietly dropped its attempt to 'liberate' [the offshore islands] by force and turned to political and long-term strategy."¹⁶⁴ However, it has consistently refused to renounce the right to use force to achieve reunification.

¹⁶³ For the text of Peng's statement, see "Document 62: PRC Defense Minister P'eng Teh-huai's Second Message to Compatriots in Taiwan, October 25, 1958," in *China and the Question of Taiwan: Documents and Analysis*, ed. Hungdah Chiu (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1973), 288-90.

¹⁶⁴ Chiu, "China, the United States, and the Question of Taiwan," 153.

While China's actions towards Taiwan became less overtly aggressive after the second Taiwan Strait crisis, its rhetoric continued to shift "between carrot and stick."¹⁶⁵ During the late-1960s, as China was in the ideological throes of the Cultural Revolution, "it was the hard line that dominated China's pronouncements, with official commentaries expressing skepticism about the prospects for a peaceful resolution."¹⁶⁶ Intense domestic upheaval, however, made any attempt to put those pronouncements into action nearly impossible. China's policy towards Taiwan during this period was essentially one of 'all bark and no bite.' By the 1970s, as the more radical phases of the Cultural Revolution were coming to an end, China began to pursue a softer line once again by attempting to allay fears that Taiwan's standard of living would be damaged by reunification. Zhou Enlai even implied an early version of the 'one China, two systems' approach developed in the 1980s by Deng Xiaoping to deal with the return of Hong Kong by suggesting the possibility of a long transition period. China also tried to encourage more direct contacts between the two sides. While the succession struggle of the mid-1970s once again brought about an escalation in China's rhetoric, this quickly subsided after Deng Xiaoping managed to solidify his position as its new 'paramount leader' in 1978.¹⁶⁷

The normalization of relations between the United States and China on January 1, 1979, and the withdrawal of US recognition for Taiwan that came with it, brought about major changes in China's approach to the problem of Taiwan. It shifted from a coercive strategy to one of "peaceful offense,"¹⁶⁸ discarding the rhetoric of 'liberation' in favor of 'reunification' and announcing a halt to its intermittent shelling of Jinmen. It also proposed renewing trade, transport, and mail linkages with Taiwan, as well as promoting academic, cultural, sports, and technological exchanges between the two – proposals known collectively as the 'three linkages' (*santong*) and the 'four exchanges' (*siliu*). In addition to these proposals, the Chairman of the Standing Committee of China's National People's Congress, Ye Jianying,

¹⁶⁵ Long, *Taiwan*, 124.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., 124.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., 124-27.

¹⁶⁸ Zhao, "Chinese Nationalism and Beijing's Taiwan Policy," 90.

set out a more detailed formula to pursue peaceful reunification in September 1981.¹⁶⁹ What came to be known as the ‘Ye Nine Points’ (see Appendix A) included suggestions to improve cross-strait communications and promises of continued political autonomy. Although the specifics regarding some of Ye’s proposals were somewhat vague, they “remain the most concrete description of terms for a Taiwan model of ‘one country, two systems,’” the model that would be used a few years later in Sino-British negotiations over Hong Kong.¹⁷⁰ Indeed, “Hong Kong was both a dry run for the reintegration of Taiwan, and China’s best chance of demonstrating to the sceptical Taiwan public that it was feasible.”¹⁷¹ Similarly, the more pragmatic approach that China took towards its other territorial disputes in the 1980s was also intended to emphasize its willingness to compromise.

It is at least conceivable that China’s new strategy could have yielded some improvements in PRC-ROC relations, if not necessarily the reunification that China wanted. Indeed, in the late-1980s, Taiwan began to soften its own approach to China and allow commercial and other links (indirectly). However, political events in both polities soon drove them further apart. China faced growing domestic discontent that eventually resulted in the use of force against political opponents. Violent demonstrations in Tibet in 1987 resulted in a major crackdown in the ostensibly ‘autonomous’ region, raising serious questions about whether Taiwan could trust the PRC in the event that it did agree to reunification. As Long suggests, “the [Beijing] government’s uncompromising and brutal handling of the unrest in Tibet...helped destroy the image so painstakingly built up of a reformed, reasonable regime.”¹⁷² The military response to student demonstrations in Tiananmen Square in 1989 further eroded any impression that the government in Beijing might be willing to accept political opposition of any kind.

At the same time, political reforms in Taiwan were eroding the ability of the KMT to impose a political solution even if it wanted to. The KMT had ruled Taiwan as a dictatorship for four decades, with martial law being lifted only on July 15, 1987. Under the leadership of President Lee Teng-hui, who took

¹⁶⁹ Long, *Taiwan*, 159-61.

¹⁷⁰ Byron S. J. Weng, “‘One Country, Two Systems’ From a Taiwan Perspective,” *Orbis* 46 (Fall 2002): 715.

¹⁷¹ Long, *Taiwan*, 162.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, 174.

power in 1988, Taiwan began a steady process of democratization. The implications of that process for relations with the mainland were dramatic. Taiwanese society remains deeply split between those Chinese that had settled on the island during the Chinese civil war (mainlanders) and those whose ancestors had settled there during the previous centuries (Taiwanese), with the former representing a relatively small minority (about 14%). Although it had made some progress in co-opting elements of the native Taiwanese (Lee himself is Taiwanese), the KMT largely represented the interests of the mainlanders who felt a stronger connection to their old homeland. Fifty years of Japanese colonialism, not to mention the KMT's own harsh policies, had helped to produce a growing 'Taiwanese' identity. As such, "democratization inevitably meant Taiwanization as well."¹⁷³ As the island became more democratic, thereby giving more political power to its Taiwanese citizens, this split in its identity made serious talks with the PRC increasingly unlikely.

By the early-1990s, Taiwan began a set of new diplomatic initiatives that would put it on a collision course with China and produce the biggest crisis in the Taiwan Strait since 1958. This new 'pragmatic diplomacy' began in the spring of 1991 with the adoption of new Guidelines for National Unification that "formally abandoned the ROC's claim to sovereign jurisdiction over the mainland and recognized the jurisdiction of the PRC there."¹⁷⁴ Further elaborations "defined 'one China' as 'one country and two areas separately ruled by two political entities.'"¹⁷⁵ While Taiwan's renunciation of its claim to rule all of China could be interpreted as significant progress in reducing tensions between the two sides, China remained concerned about the level of equality and the possibility for a multi-state solution that the new policy implied. Indeed, Alan Wachman suggests that "from [China's] point of view, the routinization of Taiwan's autonomy may be even more threatening than the erstwhile jingoism of the

¹⁷³ June Teufel Dreyer, "Flashpoint in the Taiwan Strait," *Orbis* 44 (Fall 2000): 617.

¹⁷⁴ John W. Garver, *Face Off: China, the United States, and Taiwan's Democratization* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1997), 27.

¹⁷⁵ Hung Chien-chao, *A History of Taiwan*. (Rimini: Il Cerchio Iniziative Editoriali, 2000), 327.

old KMT-dominated ROC. The KMT was, at least nominally, supportive of the concept of ‘one China.’”¹⁷⁶

China’s concerns were soon borne out as Taiwan began to seek greater diplomatic recognition. In September 1993, Taiwan announced its desire to join the UN General Assembly under the divided-states formula previously applied to Germany and Korea; further requests were made for Taiwan’s admission in 1994 and 1995. Despite its promise in 1995 to donate \$1 billion to the UN if admitted, the proposals received little support. Taiwan also pursued ‘vacation diplomacy’ as President Lee made private trips to visit with leaders in Southeast Asia in January and February 1994.¹⁷⁷ These efforts to gain greater international recognition coincided with the July 1994 release by Taiwan’s Mainland Affairs Council of a White Paper that rejected the ‘one country, two systems’ formula and stated that “it was an ‘incontrovertible historical fact’...that the ROC ‘has always been an independent sovereign state.’”¹⁷⁸ While it did not rule out the possibility of eventual reunification, it stated that any such talks would have to be conducted on the basis of parity between the two parties with China renouncing the right to use force in the matter.

Not surprisingly, China rejected this approach as a prelude to establishing Taiwan as an independent state. China’s President Jiang Zemin responded on January 30, 1995 with his own ‘Eight Points’ on ‘Continuing to Promote the Reunification of the Motherland’ (see Appendix B) which opposed Lee’s vacation diplomacy, set Taiwan’s acceptance of the principle of ‘one China’ as the prerequisite for negotiations, and refused to rule out the possible use of force to achieve reunification. Lee Teng-hui, in turn, responded on April 8 with his own ‘Six Points’ (see Appendix C) that emphasized the fact of political separation between Taiwan and the mainland, and the need for Taiwan to be treated as an equal in any negotiations. While Jiang’s Eight Points and Lee’s Six Points contained significant overlap, they remained deeply divided in three key areas. “Jiang demanded that Taiwan accept a status subordinate to Beijing, while Lee insisted the two sides be coequals. Jiang demanded that Taiwan suspend its

¹⁷⁶ Alan M. Wachman, “A Cold War of Words,” *Orbis* 46 (Fall 2002): 700.

¹⁷⁷ Garver, *Face Off*, 31-3.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 29.

‘pragmatic diplomacy,’ while Lee insisted that Beijing stop opposing Taiwan’s efforts to expand its international relations. Finally, Jiang insisted on Beijing’s right to use force against Taiwan, while Lee demanded that Beijing renounce that right.”¹⁷⁹ These differences would set the tone for a major diplomatic and military confrontation, involving not just China and Taiwan, but the United States as well, one that had the potential to escalate into a major Sino-US conflict.

The spark for this confrontation was Lee’s continued attempts to use ostensibly unofficial visits to extend Taiwan’s diplomatic profile, specifically his trip to Cornell University (his alma mater) in June 1995, which was allowed by the Clinton administration due to intense Congressional pressure. China responded by initiating three major rounds of military exercises. The first round consisted of air and naval exercises code-named Blue Whale 5 (late-June)¹⁸⁰ and two sets of missile and live-fire exercises (July 21-28 and August 15-25) less than 100 miles north of Taiwan. After intensive diplomatic negotiations with the United States in the summer and fall of 1995 aimed at probing its potential response, China initiated a second round that included amphibious landing exercises (mid-October and November 15-25) just before Taiwan’s December legislative elections. The third and largest round of exercises took place in March 1996 just before Taiwan’s March 23 presidential election and included three waves. The first (March 8-15) involved firing short-range ballistic missiles (SRBMs) into target areas just thirty-two miles southwest of the Taiwanese port of Kaohsiung and just twenty-two miles northeast of the Taiwanese port of Keelung. The second wave (March 12-20) involved air, land, and naval live-fire exercises off the coast of Fujian province. The final wave (March 18-25), also off the Fujian coast, reportedly included complex joint-forces exercises.¹⁸¹

The US response to Chinese provocations was initially mixed. Since the 1979 normalization of Sino-US relations, US policy regarding the Taiwan issue had been couched in strategic ambiguity. While the United States maintained good relations with Taiwan, including periodic sales of military hardware, it

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., 46.

¹⁸⁰ A blue whale, shaped like Taiwan, was the campaign symbol of the pro-independence Democratic Progressive Party (DPP).

¹⁸¹ Garver, *Face Off*, 75-88, 96-110.

generally downplayed any commitment to defend Taiwan in order to avoid angering China, as well as to prevent pro-independence forces from viewing any such commitment as a blank check. At the same time, however, it sought to make clear to China that any attempt to settle the issue by force would be considered a threat to US interests. Thus, the Clinton administration sought to walk a fine line by signaling displeasure with China's aggressive actions toward Taiwan, while at the same time working to smooth relations and reassure the Chinese that the United States was not out to contain China. It was not until December 19, weeks after the end of China's second round of exercises, that the *USS Nimitz* battle group passed through the Taiwan Strait on its way to the Persian Gulf from Japan. While this was intended to signal US interests in the region, it might be suggested that such a signal was ambiguous. The passage was not announced publicly for six weeks, after tensions between the United States and China had already begun to escalate, and was supposedly authorized by the Commander in Chief, Pacific Command (CINCPAC), not the White House itself. However, since the 'liberation' of Taiwan had been prevented before by the presence of US naval power in the Taiwan Strait, it is likely that the Chinese leadership "understood the threat implicit in this movement."¹⁸²

China could have responded to this implicit threat by seeking to reduce tensions; it could easily have counted its two exercises as successes and moved on. But instead, "China upped the ante."¹⁸³ It announced the third, and largest, round of exercises, and even seemed to imply that it was willing to use nuclear weapons to defend its claims on Taiwan against US involvement, with one official suggesting that US policymakers "care more about Los Angeles than they do about Taiwan."¹⁸⁴ Although it has been suggested that this was merely meant to denote China's ability to deter US nuclear power,¹⁸⁵ such comments were at the very least provocative. When the United States announced on March 8, the first day of China's SRBM tests, that it was deploying the *USS Independence* battle group to the region, China responded the following day by announcing the second wave of exercises. When the United States

¹⁸² Ibid., 97.

¹⁸³ Ibid., 97.

¹⁸⁴ Patrick E. Tyler, "As China Threatens Taiwan, It Makes Sure U.S. Listens," *The New York Times*, January 24, 1996, A3.

¹⁸⁵ Whiting, "China's Use of Force," 129-30.

announced on March 11 that the *Nimitz* was being ordered back to the region as well, China responded by not only following through with its second wave of exercises, but also announcing on March 15 a third wave.

On the surface, China's unwillingness to renounce the use of force in pursuing the inherently nationalist goal of reunification, as well as the extent of its attempts at coercive diplomacy during the 1995-96 Taiwan Strait crisis, might be considered clear evidence of the conflict propensity of Chinese nationalism. China explicitly framed its actions in terms of nationalism, as evidenced by remarks made by Defense Minister Chi Haotian just prior to the start of the March 1996 exercises, in which he quoted Zhu De's statement that the liberation of Taiwan was necessary to wash away the stain of national humiliation.¹⁸⁶ China's willingness to risk a confrontation with the world's last superpower would seem to indicate that such comments were not merely rhetoric intended for domestic consumption. However, the evidence is less clear when we consider the fact that the crisis did not escalate into an actual conflict. Thus, before rendering a judgment about the conflict propensity of Chinese nationalism (from a macro-structural perspective), it is necessary to consider the reasons for why the crisis ended without violence, and what this may imply about the possibility for conflict in the future.

One explanation is that the threat of US intervention successfully deterred further Chinese action. At first glance, this seems feasible. Chinese actions have always been strongly conditioned by the potential for US intervention; the island would have been 'liberated' decades ago without it. As such, it would seem logical to surmise that the US decision to send two aircraft carrier battle groups to the region erased any initial misconceptions that Chinese leaders may have had regarding US interests and convinced them that continued belligerence could carry significant military, political, and economic costs, none of which they were willing to pay. Reunification might be an important nationalist goal, but China was unwilling to engage in conflict to pursue it. If this interpretation is correct, then nationalism may be less a *cause* of conflict than simply an underlying reason for why one state's interests conflict with another's. This would imply that while nationalism may push states to pursue goals of national self-

¹⁸⁶ Roy, "Tensions in the Taiwan Strait," 79.

determination that may put them in conflict with other states, their willingness to actually use force is highly subject to more traditional concerns – e.g., balance of power, domestic politics. Thus, nationalism might be seen as playing only a supporting role in explaining international conflict.

However, Roy warns that it would be a mistake to treat China as a “paper dragon” that backed down in the face of US threats.¹⁸⁷ While US actions clearly influenced Chinese decision-making, he suggests another possibility – that China had limited goals in its use of coercion and had no intention of using force against Taiwan in the first place. There are a number of reasons why this would seem to be the case. First, Taiwan’s transgressions had been relatively limited. While it might be seen by China as coming dangerously close, Taiwan had not yet crossed the lines China had drawn in the proverbial sand that would require a violent reaction. Taiwan had not declared independence, become politically unstable, come under the control of a foreign power, developed nuclear weapons, or even denied the possibility of eventually engaging in reunification talks – all of which China has suggested at various times could result in the use of force.¹⁸⁸ China’s actions might thus be seen as proportional to the provocation. In addition, despite the concerns of some observers who believed that the Chinese military buildup was a prelude to an actual attack,¹⁸⁹ Chinese military deployments did not indicate any intention to use force during the crisis. Roy argues that this “is clear from the fact that the PLA mobilised forces only a fraction of the size that would have been necessary for an actual attack.”¹⁹⁰ Garver makes the same point, noting that “an invasion would require far more troops, aircraft, and, especially, civilian vessels to ferry troops than were mobilized for the March 1996 exercises.”¹⁹¹

Finally, Allen Whiting argued that China engaged in a significant degree of risk management in order to ensure that its preparations were not misunderstood.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid., 80.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid., 78.

¹⁸⁹ For instance, see Yossef Bodansky, “Beijing Finalises Invasion Plans for Taiwan: Have They Gone Too Far to Pull Back?,” *Defense & Foreign Affairs Strategic Policy* 24 (February 29, 1996): 7-12; and Yossef Bodansky, “China’s Invasion: The Final Warnings,” *Defense & Foreign Affairs Strategic Policy* 24 (February 29, 1996): 13-5.

¹⁹⁰ Roy, “Tensions in the Taiwan Strait,” 80.

¹⁹¹ Garver, *Face Off*, 104.

Risk management began in mid-1995 with the explicit designation of scheduled missile firings and the advance announcement of exercises in the fall. In addition, none of the missiles fired in Taiwan's vicinity in either year were armed. PLAAF planes flew across the midstrait line in 1996, contrary to practice by both sides, but they did not come close to Taiwan. Finally, in contrast with all previous cases [of Taiwan Strait crises], Beijing took several steps to inform Washington that no attack on Taiwan was planned.¹⁹²

Similarly, Garver points out that "the PLA did not fill the Strait with air superiority fighters. It did not simulate massed strikes by large numbers of precision attack aircraft. Overall, air participation in the March exercises was moderate....Its ships and planes did not cover the approaches to Taiwan or approach U.S. ships in the area. Nor did PLA radar lock on to U.S. warships and planes in a fashion suggesting possible target acquisition."¹⁹³ The evidence would thus indicate that China had no intention of actually using force against Taiwan, much less against US forces. To borrow a statement made by Alastair Johnston regarding the importance of economic linkages as a barrier to conflict, "would there have been such a careful delineation of the boundaries of the PLA military exercises, such careful signalling to American and Taiwanese officials, such continuing normalcy in all other aspects of Sino-U.S. and China-Taiwan economic, cultural and political relationships in the midst of a very heavy concentration of modern firepower"¹⁹⁴ if China had actually intended to use force?

Roy argues that "Beijing's goal...was to signal disapproval [of Taiwanese actions], not to start a war."¹⁹⁵ In essence, China's demonstrations of force were primarily symbolic. Such an argument has merit. Since China's threat to use force can be seen as an effective deterrent against any attempt on the part of Taiwan to declare independence, he suggests that "the PRC has sufficient incentive to maintain this posture even if there is no actual intention to attack Taiwan. China's warning to Taiwan, in other words, might be a bluff rather than a threat."¹⁹⁶ Yet while Roy acknowledges that "such a tactic would be consistent with the heritage of Chinese politico-military thought, which emphasises the importance of

¹⁹² Whiting, "China's Use of Force," 123.

¹⁹³ Garver, *Face Off*, 109.

¹⁹⁴ Alastair Iain Johnston, "China's Militarized Interstate Dispute Behaviour 1949-1992: A First Cut at the Data," *The China Quarterly* 153 (March 1998): 3.

¹⁹⁵ Roy "Tensions in the Taiwan Strait," 80.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 78.

strategem and psychological warfare,”¹⁹⁷ he maintains that China’s position regarding Taiwan is not a bluff. He supports his position by noting the place of Taiwan in China’s myth of national humiliation, a point that has already been made here in detail. However, one can also surmise this from China’s actions during the crisis itself.

The seriousness of the US decision to deploy not one, but two aircraft carrier groups to the region should not be underestimated. As Garver points out, “deployment of a second battle group was in some ways more important than deployment of the first. One aircraft carrier could be seen as a symbol, a demonstration, or political theater. Two represented a more real capability.”¹⁹⁸ Yet far from being deterred by US involvement, China escalated its coercive actions toward Taiwan. While plans for the exercises had probably been made before the United States announced its intention to intervene, Garver suggests that the decision to follow through with them “in the face of deployment of two U.S. battle groups demonstrated that China would not be intimidated by Washington.”¹⁹⁹ Moreover, while some of the third-wave exercises were actually cancelled, this was largely due to weather considerations which were likened by Chinese sources to “exercises being conducted during a typhoon.”²⁰⁰ Thus, while China may not have been willing to use force in the face of the still somewhat limited Taiwanese provocation, this does not mean that China would never use force if backed into a corner – e.g., by a formal declaration of Taiwanese independence – even if that meant a conflict with a militarily superior United States. In analyzing past Chinese uses of force, Whiting argues that “the PLA has been constrained not by a power imbalance favoring the opponent, but by risk management through closely supervised rules of engagement in an attempt to control escalation.”²⁰¹ While China may be careful to keep escalation within boundaries with which it is comfortable, this does not mean that it will shy away from the use of force if

¹⁹⁷ Ibid., 78.

¹⁹⁸ Garver, *Face Off*, 103.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid., 106-07.

²⁰⁰ Cited in Garver, *Face Off*, 106.

²⁰¹ Whiting, “China’s Use of Force,” 126.

it believes it to be necessary. Roy argues that “American influence probably would not be decisive in preventing Beijing’s military reaction to Taiwan’s full declaration of independence.”²⁰²

The fact that China appears willing to take on the United States, if necessary, in order to pursue its irredentist ambitions with respect to Taiwan, despite the obvious negative consequences that such a conflict would bring about and despite the Chinese recognition that they are not militarily ready for such a conflict, supports the proposition that nationalism is an important factor in Chinese foreign policy and could lead China to engage in international conflict. However, *willingness* to engage in conflict to safeguard ‘national’ interests does not mean that such conflicts are inevitable, nor even likely. The oscillation between bellicosity and conciliation that is evident in China’s behavior toward Taiwan since 1949 indicates that the parameters set by China’s type identity as a nation-state are fairly broad. The interest in reclaiming national territory supports a wide range of policy options for pursuing that interest, including force. Thus, there are limits to what the macro-structural dimension of Chinese nationalism can tell us about China’s propensity to engage in nationalist conflicts. It can explain why Taiwan is a vital interest for which China is willing to go to war, but it cannot necessarily tell us whether or not such a war would actually occur. This would depend on a variety of other factors.

Indeed, the difficulties in making predictions regarding the likelihood of conflict over Taiwan are evident in Roy’s predictions prior to the 2000 Taiwanese presidential election. Roy argued Chinese responses to continued Taiwanese intransigence were liable to be stronger in the future. He supported this assessment with the following reasons:

First, the principle of proportionality would suggest that the closer Taiwan moves toward statehood, the more intense will be China’s demonstration of disapproval. Second, Chinese leaders are likely to interpret any new diplomatic probes by Taipei as evidence that previous PRC signals were not strong enough to ‘teach Taiwan a lesson’, and that the next signal must therefore be even stronger. Finally, to avoid the credibility of its threats being undermined by the ‘crying “wolf”’ effect, the PLA’s future actions will have to be more threatening than those in 1995-96 if they are to achieve comparable results.²⁰³

²⁰² Roy, “Tensions in the Taiwan Strait,” 77.

²⁰³ Ibid., 80.

Yet so far this has not occurred. Indeed, China has largely moderated its approach to Taiwan despite its election in 2000 of Chen Shui-bien, a member of the pro-independence Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), and Chen's attempts to push constitutional reforms that China sees as a prelude to independence. Since 2000, "the PRC has played the good boy, refraining from taking any provocative action against Taipei and exercising restraint in its response to what it sees as unwarranted actions or threatening statements from Taiwan."²⁰⁴ Thus, while the macro-structural dimension of nationalism is important for understanding the nationalist parameters of Chinese foreign policy, it is necessarily incomplete. Strategic, economic, and political circumstances, as well as other social structural aspects of Chinese nationalism, must also be considered. These other social factors – namely, the micro-structural dimension of Chinese nationalism – will be discussed in the next chapter.

²⁰⁴ Wachman, "A Cold War of Words," 701.

Chapter 7. THE CRACKED LOOKING GLASS: SINO-US ROLE CONFLICTS & THE MICRO-STRUCTURAL DIMENSION OF CHINESE NATIONALISM¹

The last chapter made clear that the issue of Taiwan is not a long-standing, objective Chinese interest, but one that has been comparatively recently constructed as a result of a macro-structural change in China's identity – i.e., its transformation from cultural-state to nation-state. However, as already suggested, while this macro-structural change may help to explain *why* Taiwan is seen as a vital Chinese interest, it says relatively little about *how* China is likely to pursue that interest. Nationalism as an expression of type identity may make China willing to use force to prevent formal Taiwanese independence, even in the face of US intervention, but it certainly does not foreclose other possible courses of action. The shifts in China's Taiwan policy since 1949 testify to the fact that while type identity may set parameters on a state's behavior by informing it what it wants (e.g., reunification), the means by which an end is achieved will largely depend on circumstances, including the dual constraints of material power and domestic politics. This demonstrates the limits of using macro-structurally-defined interests alone to explain (let alone predict) state behavior. Yet while power and politics certainly cannot be ignored, another social factor remains to be considered – the micro-structural dimension of state identity. As discussed in Chapter 4, how a state's macro-structural interests manifest themselves will partly depend on the *role* that the state assumes in its relations with others. Since such roles are not chosen freely, but are constituted by interaction with an Other (or Others), it is necessary to examine the dynamics of nationalist role formation in order to understand how they might set the stage for nationalist conflict.

¹ The title for this chapter is adapted from Dennis Bloodworth, *The Chinese Looking Glass* (New York: Dell Publishing Co., Inc., 1967).

The widely-observed deterioration of Sino-US relations since 1989 provides an excellent case for exploring these dynamics. This shift has generally been attributed to two factors – (1) America’s reaction to China’s violent suppression of pro-democracy demonstrators in Tiananmen Square and (2) the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe, as well as the disintegration of the Soviet Union, that brought an end to the Cold War.² In other words, the character of Sino-US relations was altered by the dynamics of domestic politics, a fundamental change in the distribution of power in the international system (i.e., the breakdown of bipolarity), or some combination of the two. Yet as David Lampton notes, such explanations have “become a cliché of post-cold war analysis.”³ While either explanation is accurate as far as it goes, neither provides a complete picture of how this fundamental change in Sino-US relations came about. One needs a unifying theme that helps to connect these factors and provides a broader understanding of the changes that have occurred in Sino-US relations over the last fifteen years. Looking at the deterioration of Sino-US relations since 1989 in terms of the dynamics of nationalist role formation provides just such a theme. Furthermore, the pivotal position that the United States has in the relationship between China and Taiwan makes such an analysis critical to the story of Chinese nationalism and foreign policy. Thus, in order to fully understand the impact of nationalism on Chinese behavior, particularly with respect to Taiwan, it is necessary to examine the micro-structural dimension of Chinese nationalism – i.e., nationalism as a role constituted by its interaction with the United States – by applying the reactive model of nationalist conflict outlined in Chapter 4.

Given its importance to the analysis that follows, it is worth summarizing this model. As previously discussed, roles are socially constructed through a mirroring process in which each state seeks to assume a role for itself and impose a corresponding counter-role on the Other with which it is interacting. While these roles and counter-roles may initially be derived from some set of a priori ideas

² For instance, see Steven I. Levine, “Sino-American Relations: Testing the Limits,” in *China and the World: Chinese Foreign Relations in the Post-Cold War Era*, 3d ed., ed. Samuel S. Kim (Boulder: Westview Press, 1994), 77; and David Shambaugh, “Patterns of Interaction in Sino-American Relations,” in *Chinese Foreign Policy: Theory and Practice*, ed. Thomas W. Robinson and David Shambaugh (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 205.

³ David M. Lampton, *Same Bed, Different Dreams: Managing U.S.-China Relations, 1989-2000* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 3.

and interests (i.e., each actor brings some ideational baggage with it to the interaction), they are subject to change as continued interaction allows each party to learn and adjust its ideas about the Other, and its own relationship to it. As such, the images that states develop of each other are likely to become tightly intertwined, or as David Edelstein puts it, “are often in ‘infinite regress,’ meaning that one state’s images of another state are influenced by that state’s image of the other state and so on.”⁴ This is certainly true of China and the United States. As Peter Gries points out, “Chinese and American identities are dynamic, evolving in part through their mutual interactions.”⁵

Yet as already mentioned, this mirroring process will not necessarily lead to more cooperative behavior or greater understanding. On the contrary, the role a state seeks to enact (and the corresponding counter-role it seeks to project on the Other) may be incompatible with the role that the Other seeks to enact (and the corresponding counter-role it seeks to project back). Such a role conflict may lead to an ideational security dilemma as the actions taken by each state to defend its identity against the other causes a reaction that further erodes its ideational security. This could in turn provide the basis for antagonistic relations between the parties that could develop into a long-term rivalry, and possibly even into interstate conflict. In essence, the extreme behavior so often associated with nationalism can be understood as the potential outcome of a reaction to an ideational threat. In order to apply this model to Sino-US relations, it is necessary to do three things – 1). identify the primary role that China seeks to enact, 2). establish whether or not a role conflict exists between China and the United States, and 3). analyze the effect of this role conflict on China’s foreign policy in order to determine the extent to which Chinese nationalism is a reaction to it. Each of these issues will be addressed in this chapter. The question of whether or not reactive nationalism makes China more prone to conflict will be addressed in the conclusions.

⁴ David M. Edelstein, “American Images of a Rising China: Lessons from History and Theory,” in *China in the American Political Imagination*, ed. Carola McGiffert (Washington: The CSIS Press, 2003), 13.

⁵ Peter Hays Gries, *China’s New Nationalism: Pride, Politics, and Diplomacy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 31.

The Victimized Great Power: China's Role in World Affairs

As with most states, one can identify many conceptions of China's role in world affairs.⁶ Indeed, Samuel Kim has suggested that "the People's Republic...has succumbed to wild swings of national identity projection over the years, mutating through a series of varying global roles."⁷ However, it is possible to identify one key role in Chinese foreign relations that is central to the enactment of all others – the role of 'victimized great power.' As discussed in Chapter 6, China has long seen itself as a victim of foreign imperialism. It is this sense of victimization that has spurred Chinese attempts at reform and revolution since the 19th century. Yet victimhood has done little to dampen China's fundamental belief in itself as a great nation. Chinese leaders throughout the 20th century "have all shared a strong sense of entitlement that China deserves great power status as they believe China's decline is a mistake of history, which they should correct."⁸ As Gilbert Rozman points out, "the Chinese take for granted that their venerable civilization and vast population ensure that they have something positive to contribute to the world."⁹ In the days of Mao, this confidence manifested itself as a fervent belief in China's ability to be a leader in the international communist movement, a bulwark against imperialism and superpower hegemony, and a model for the developing world. As economic reform has brought unprecedented prosperity to the Chinese people, China has increasingly come to see its role in more common terms – as that of a great power. Rozman argues that "of all of the contenders in the [Chinese] quest for national identity in the 1990s, the notion of China as a great power (*daguo*) has gained a clear-cut victory."¹⁰

The reasons for China's self-image as a victim of imperialism have already been addressed. However, it is necessary to examine the great power component of its role conception in more detail. For realists, great power status is largely an objective outcome of having superior material capabilities relative

⁶ For instance, see Onnig Beylerian with Christophe Canivet, "China: Role Conceptions after the Cold War," in *Role Quests in the Post-Cold War Era: Foreign Policies in Transition*, ed. Philippe G. Le Prestre (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1997).

⁷ Samuel S. Kim, "China and the World in Theory and Practice," in *China and the World: Chinese Foreign Relations in the Post-Cold War Era*, 3d ed, ed. Samuel S. Kim (Boulder: Westview Press, 1994), 3.

⁸ Cited in Suisheng Zhao, *A Nation-State by Construction: Dynamics of Modern Chinese Nationalism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), 12.

⁹ Gilbert Rozman, "China's Quest for Great Power Identity," *Orbis* 43 (Summer 1999): 384.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 385.

to other states. Yet this is not necessarily the case. Since a state's material capabilities only acquire meaning through shared knowledge, capabilities alone do not make it a great power. Like so many other phenomena in international relations (e.g., sovereignty), great power status is largely the product of social construction – i.e., a state is a great power if it is recognized by others as such. This is not to say that capabilities are not important in determining who can and cannot be a great power; they clearly are. It would be difficult to mistake a state with few capabilities (e.g., Costa Rica) for a great power, just as it would be difficult to mistake a state with enormous capabilities (e.g., the United States) for not being one. Returning to the issue of rump materialism and the author's own realist-constructivist position (see Chapter 2), material factors provide an important foundation on which social constructs are built. However, this leaves open the possibility that a state whose level of capabilities are ambiguous (i.e., significant, but not overwhelming) could be denied great power status by other great powers because its capabilities are not yet recognized as being sufficient, or could be granted that status prematurely based on an assumption or expectation of the state's current or future capabilities.

The latter is the case for China. Given the sorry state of China's position vis-à-vis the Western powers at the beginning of the 20th century, its "transition from pupil to power"¹¹ is nothing short of remarkable. Yet while the Nationalists deserve some credit for helping to modernize the country, a closer examination of China's rise to great power status reveals that it was less a matter of acquiring the requisite capabilities than of getting recognition of its status by other, established great powers. Early attempts by Republican China to be treated as an equal were largely unsuccessful. Its entry into WWI in the hopes of reclaiming German concessions brought only bitter disappointment. It was not until WWII that China managed to attain recognition as a great power by leveraging US fear of a separate peace with Japan to overcome its reluctance to making China one of the Big Four (the United States, Britain, the Soviet Union, and China). China was included in the Washington and Quebec Conferences (May and August 1943, respectively) as a major Allied power, and was then able to use the United States to put

¹¹ William C. Kirby, "The Internationalization of China: Foreign Relations at Home and Abroad in the Republican Era," *The China Quarterly* 150 (June 1997): 433.

pressure on Britain and the Soviet Union to formally acknowledge its new status in the declaration of the Moscow Conference (October 1943).¹² Although Hans van de Ven argues that unfavorable provisions in the Yalta agreements (February 1945) and the Sino-Soviet Treaty of Friendship (August 1945) indicate that China was still not fully accepted as an equal,¹³ its inclusion as one of the five permanent members of the UN Security Council indicates that China was now taken seriously as a major player on the world stage.

What makes this turn of events significant is not just that it represents a dramatic reversal in China's fortunes, but that it occurred despite China's continued relative weakness. While China's efforts in the war were important in keeping Japanese attention divided in its own two-front war, its material capabilities were certainly not on par with the other three major Allied powers.¹⁴ Indeed, throughout the Cold War, China's capabilities remained well behind those of the two dominant superpowers. Its weight could be felt close to its borders (as it was during the Korean War), but its ability to project power much beyond them remained severely limited. Indeed, despite two decades of modernization efforts, China's military capabilities still remain well behind those of other major powers, not to mention the United States, with little ability to project air or naval power beyond its borders for any extended period of time. In many ways, China has remained at best a regional power, always fearful of its security with respect to the superpowers. Its interests have largely been regional in character (e.g., territorial claims, regional balance of power),¹⁵ and its foreign relations correspondingly centered on the Asia-Pacific.¹⁶ Until fairly recently the PRC remained largely ambivalent toward international organizations, treating its membership in them (including the UN Security Council) more as a symbol of its international status than an arena for

¹² John W. Garver, *Chinese-Soviet Relations 1937-1945: The Diplomacy of Chinese Nationalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 193-94.

¹³ Hans van de Ven, "Some Historical Perspectives on the Diplomacy of Chinese Nationalism," *Issues & Studies* 36, no.6 (November/December 2000): 67-8.

¹⁴ While the same could be said of France at the time, the French could at least benefit from their past history as a great power.

¹⁵ Steven I. Levine, "China in Asia: The PRC as a Regional Power," in *China's Foreign Relations in the 1980s*, ed. Harry Harding (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), 110.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 107; and Samuel S. Kim, "China's Pacific Policy: Reconciling the Irreconcilable," *International Journal* 50 (Summer 1995): 464.

pursuing global interests.¹⁷ Yet despite the fact that its capabilities were more characteristic of a regional power, China was increasingly recognized as a great power, if only due to expectations about its future. As Steven Levine once put it, “China’s role in contemporary politics is determined more by what China may become than by what it already is.”¹⁸

Whether or not such expectations were warranted, China has been more than willing to play the role of great power and for decades has been a vocal advocate of the idea that it is an important actor in world affairs. As Kim observes, “China is continually issuing calls for all the nations, especially the superpowers and international organizations to get on the good side of China as a rapidly rising global power. China is constantly cultivating the expectation that everything is possible with China and nothing is possible without China.”¹⁹ Such sentiments are clear in a statement by then-Foreign Minister, Qian Qichen, that “more and more countries are paying attention to the rise of China...People are talking about the potential role that China can play in world politics...World peace and development need China...To isolate China will not go anywhere, but hurt oneself.”²⁰ In essence, “without first having acquired the reach of a global power, China acts as if it has already become a global power.”²¹ As such, it has sought to define its largely regional interests in global terms. As Levine observed in the 1980s:

China has regarded its conflict with Vietnam as a microcosm of a global struggle against Soviet expansionism. It sees its support of Malaysia’s and Indonesia’s claims to the Straits of Malacca as part of a broader pattern of Third World opposition to the maritime hegemony of the superpowers. It portrays its policies toward Taiwan and South Korea as examples of a worldwide resistance against American imperialism. It depicts its trade with ASEAN as an instance of South-South economic cooperation.²²

¹⁷ For discussions of China’s involvement in IOs, see Samuel S. Kim, “China’s International Organizational Behaviour,” in *Chinese Foreign Policy: Theory and Practice*, eds. Thomas W. Robinson and David Shambaugh (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995).

¹⁸ Levine, “China in Asia,” 110. Some observers continue to make this claim. See Gerald Segal, “Does China Matter?,” *Foreign Affairs* 78, no. 5 (September/October 1999): 24-36.

¹⁹ Kim, “China’s International Organizational Behaviour,” 417.

²⁰ Cited in Yongnian Zheng, *Discovering Chinese Nationalism in China: Modernization, Identity, and International Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 125-26.

²¹ Kim, “China’s International Organizational Behaviour,” 417.

²² Levine, “China in Asia,” 110-11.

This led him to describe China as “a regional power without a regional policy.”²³ Although Kim suggests that China’s approach to regional relations is no longer “merely an extension of its superpower policy,” he argues that China “still does not have a proper regional policy.”²⁴ This is because “during the Cold War years, none of China’s multiple identity enactments and role playing had much to do with Asian regionalism.”²⁵ Instead of defining itself in regional terms, China has always sought to define itself and its role in the world in global terms – i.e., with respect to its position vis-à-vis the superpowers.

Key to this definition of itself was the emergence in the early-1970s of the strategic triangle.²⁶ After years of international isolation, the United States began actively courting China as a potential counterweight to the Soviet Union, “playing up China’s standing as one of the world’s five great powers.”²⁷ Its position within the strategic triangle thus became an important element of China’s identity as a great power. Indeed, Rozman suggests that “even more than Moscow or Washington, Beijing became enamored of the strategic triangle...Increasingly, it measured its importance as one of three global powers capable of shifting the balance of world power.”²⁸ While the international system might technically remain bipolar, China’s position between the two camps introduced a degree of tripolarity that proved extremely useful to it, “enabling Beijing to exploit superpower rivalry to gain its own strategic leverage, economic and trade benefits, and global weight.”²⁹ Kim suggests that “the structural reality of [this system] is an answer to the puzzle of how a regional power managed to be treated as a global power without first having acquired the reach or the requisite normative and material resources of a global power.”³⁰

The fact that China’s role as a great power depended more on its position in the strategic triangle than on its own capabilities had important implications for its adjustment to the post-Cold War world. On

²³ Ibid., 107.

²⁴ Kim, “China’s Pacific Policy,” 469.

²⁵ Ibid., 464.

²⁶ For an excellent discussion of the strategic triangle, see William T. Tow, “China and the International Strategic System,” in *Chinese Foreign Policy: Theory and Practice*, eds. Thomas W. Robinson and David Shambaugh (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995).

²⁷ Rozman, “China’s Quest for Great Power Identity,” 388.

²⁸ Ibid., 388-89.

²⁹ Kim, “China’s Pacific Policy,” 466.

³⁰ Ibid., 466.

the one hand, the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Union should have been, and to some extent was, welcomed by China as a dramatic improvement in its security environment. Kim suggests that “the progressive removal of the Soviet threat from China’s expansive regional security perimeters...brought perhaps the deepest international peace that China has enjoyed since the Opium War. Indeed, there is no shortage of upbeat assessments of the external security environment by Chinese officials and policy specialists as the most satisfactory since the founding of the People’s Republic of China in 1949.”³¹ Yet at the same time, he notes that China’s security policies – e.g., accelerated military modernization, increased defense spending, continued nuclear testing – indicate a certain level of insecurity that seems paradoxical to its professed satisfaction with the end of Cold War tensions. While he suggests that such insecurities may simply be a result of uncertainty due to dramatic changes in the international system, he also notes that “part of the problem also has to do with the wrenching national identity difficulties that practically all major powers encounter in trying to adjust to a world in which conflict no longer takes place along an East-West divide.”³²

For China, such difficulties were particularly serious. While the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe helped to validate America’s role in the world as a champion of democracy (as will be discussed), the end of superpower competition risked undermining China’s role as a great power. As Jing-dong Yuan argues, “the end of the Cold War has to some degree created an identity crisis for China. The decline and demise of the Soviet Union, the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe, the US-led victory in the Gulf War, and the appearance if not the reality of a ‘unipolar moment’ have spelled an end to the relevance of China in the superpower balancing game.”³³ This helps to explain the initial ambivalence of Chinese analysts to a world that appeared at the time to be moving toward multipolarity, presumably with China as one of the poles. As Kim points out, “a multipolarizing world was seen...as

³¹ Ibid., 461.

³² Ibid., 463.

³³ Jing-dong Yuan, “Threat Perception and Chinese Security Policy after the Cold War,” *Pacific Focus* 8, no. 1 (Spring 1998): 56.

bereft of the much-coveted balancing force – the vaunted China card – in global triangular geopolitics.”³⁴ Thus, even if China were one of many major powers, its overall importance in global affairs seemed to be diminished. Of course, the need to find a new way of validating its position as a great power to replace the strategic triangle soon led Chinese policy-makers to adopt ‘multipolarization’ (*duojihua*) as the CCPs official characterization of the international system at the 14th Party Congress in late-1992.³⁵ Indeed, multipolarity has since been actively advocated by China, not just as a description of the system as it is, but as a goal to be pursued by the international community. However, this last point provides a clue to China’s shift in attitude towards multipolarity, from reluctance to whole-hearted embrace. While it may not be as useful to China as the strategic triangle, it is far better than the potential alternative – a unipolar world led by the United States.

As early as 1990, it was already being suggested that the international system was shifting not to multipolarity but to unipolarity, with the United States as the world’s preeminent power.³⁶ By the late-1990s, this interpretation was becoming widely accepted. As Stephen Brooks and William Wohlforth point out, American capabilities are so far beyond those of any potential competitor, according to every measure, that “if today’s American primacy does not constitute unipolarity, then nothing ever will.”³⁷ Such a development is of great concern to Chinese leaders. As many neorealists would argue, the rise of a single, dominant power should be seen by others as a potential threat to their interests, and this is certainly true of China. Yet beyond the possibility that an unrestrained United States could threaten Chinese interests (e.g., by preventing reunification with Taiwan), unipolarity threatens China’s identity as a great power. If a shift from de facto tripolarity to multipolarity represented a certain loss of status and relevance, then a shift to unipolarity represents a far greater loss.

This helps to explain why China has fought hard to maintain the fiction of multipolarity against the reality of a unipolar world. While China has come to recognize the position of the United States as

³⁴ Kim, “China’s Pacific Policy,” 466.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 466.

³⁶ See Charles Krauthammer, “The Unipolar Moment,” *Foreign Affairs* 70, no. 1 (1990/91): 23-33.

³⁷ Stephen Brooks and William Wohlforth, “American Primacy in Perspective,” *Foreign Affairs* 81, no. 4 (July/August 2002): 21.

the world's preeminent power,³⁸ Chinese analysts continue to describe the international system in multipolar terms, frequently using the term *yi chao duo qiang* – “one superpower and four big powers”³⁹ – to imply a rough equivalence within the context of an asymmetric distribution of power.⁴⁰ China has been a vocal proponent of multipolarity. Deng Xiaoping himself, in describing the international system at the end of the Cold War, argued that “the international structure will be divided into three poles, four poles, perhaps five poles in the future. In this so-called multipolar world, China must be one of the poles. China should not underestimate herself. Whatever the structure is, China is a pole.”⁴¹ Toward that end, China has worked to promote partnerships with other important states, including the EU, Japan, and Russia, in order “to redefine its position” in the international system.⁴² In essence, China has sought to replace the strategic triangle with a multipolar alternative that allows it to maintain its identity as a great power in the face of vastly superior US capabilities.

Of course, given the growing US concerns throughout the 1990s about ‘the rise of China,’ Chinese worries about their own irrelevance in a unipolar world dominated by the United States might seem paradoxical. After all, if China’s role as a great power is partly constructed through its relations with the United States, and the United States sees China’s growing material capabilities (economic and military) as a potential threat, then China can remain secure in the knowledge that it is as important as it thinks. Yet great power status involves more than just having an ability to threaten; it involves a certain measure of respect from other great powers, even if it is only the grudging respect of one adversary for another. After its troubled entrance into the family of nations, it is precisely this kind of respect that

³⁸ For a discussion of China’s reaction to the US as a unipolar power, see Denny Roy, “China’s Reaction to American Predominance,” *Survival* 45, no. 3 (Autumn 2003): 57-78.

³⁹ The four big powers generally refer to the European Union, Japan, Russia, and China. See Suisheng Zhao, “Chinese Foreign Policy: Pragmatism and Strategic Behavior,” in *Chinese Foreign Policy: Pragmatism and Strategic Behavior*, ed. Suisheng Zhao (Armonk: M. E. Sharpe, 2004), 13.

⁴⁰ Similar formulations have been suggested in the Western international relations literature. For instance, see Aaron L. Friedberg, “Ripe for Rivalry: Prospects for Peace in a Multipolar Asia,” in *East Asian Security*, ed. Michael E. Brown, Sean M. Lynn-Jones, and Steven E. Miller (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1998), 4; and Richard K. Betts, “Wealth, Power, and Instability: East Asia and the United States after the Cold War,” in *East Asian Security*, ed. Michael E. Brown, Sean M. Lynn-Jones, and Steven E. Miller (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1998), 39.

⁴¹ Cited in Zheng, *Discovering Chinese Nationalism in China*, 125.

⁴² Joseph Y. S. Cheng and Zhang Wankun, “Patterns and Dynamics of China’s International Strategic Behavior,” in *Chinese Foreign Policy: Pragmatism and Strategic Behavior*, ed. Suisheng Zhao (Armonk: M. E. Sharpe, 2004), 180.

China wants most, and feels is owed it. While China may initially have been given its seat at the table of great powers based on expectations of its future importance, most Chinese believe that such expectations have now been fulfilled. Its successes in modernizing over the last quarter century have given the Chinese “a strong sense of national pride” that Yongnian Zheng suggests is “probably as strong as, if not *stronger*, than what they felt when Mao Zedong declared the establishment of the People’s Republic in 1949.”⁴³ As such, “the new leadership has identified pursuing international respect for China as a major theme of China’s foreign relations.”⁴⁴ Whatever the significance of China’s material capabilities, without this respect its role identity as a great power would be threatened.

Getting on the Wrong Side of History: The Development of the Sino-US Role Conflict in the 1990s

Having outlined China’s key role identity, it is now necessary to establish whether or not a role conflict exists between it and the United States. To do so, it is necessary to identify the key US role, and the corresponding counter-role the United States seeks to impose on China. The first task is relatively straightforward. America’s self-image has long been shaped by a fundamental belief in the universal efficacy of liberal democracy and free-market capitalism, and of its own central role as the ultimate repository for and transmitter of these values to the rest of the world. While policy-makers often debate the proper means by which to fulfill that role, the idea of ‘American exceptionalism’ – “that the United States is a special, chosen nation created to play a unique role in history as the redeemer of an inferior, corrupt, and oppressed world”⁴⁵ – remains an important defining element of US foreign policy.

As with any state, this sense of its role in the world leads the United States to cast others in corresponding counter-roles that help to give that role meaning. However, in addressing the question of what counter-role the United States seeks to cast on China, it is necessary to recall the issue brought up in Chapter 4 – namely, that even given a relatively constant role, the counter-role a state seeks to cast may

⁴³ Zheng, *Discovering Chinese Nationalism in China*, 2.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 125.

⁴⁵ Nancy Bernkopf Tucker, “America First,” in *China in the American Political Imagination*, ed. Carola McGiffert (Washington: The CSIS Press, 2003), 17.

be subject to change depending on circumstances. This is certainly true of the United States and China. As Lampton points out, an “enduring component of the American view of China has been that Americans hold, seemingly simultaneously, two images of China – one benign and constructive, the other malevolent and threatening.”⁴⁶ These images were eloquently described by Harold Isaacs in the 1950s:

The name of Marco Polo is scratched onto the mind of almost every American school child. Attached to it are powerful images of China’s ancient greatness, civilization, art, hoary wisdom. With it in time comes a heavy cluster of admirable qualities widely attributed to the Chinese as people: high intelligence, persistent industry, filial piety, peaceableness, stoicism. These were attributes identified in our own generation with the people of Pearl Buck’s novels, solid, simple, courageous folk staunchly coping with the blows of fate and adverse circumstances.

Genghiz Khan and his Mongol hordes are the non-Chinese ancestors of quite another set of images also strongly associated with the Chinese: cruelty, barbarism, inhumanity; a faceless, impenetrable, overwhelming mass, irresistible if once loosed. Along this way we discover the devious and difficult heathen, the killers of girl infants, the binders of women’s feet, the torturers of a thousand cuts, the headsmen, the Boxer Rebellion and the Yellow Peril, the nerveless indifference to pain, death, or to human disaster, the whole set of lurid, strange, and fearful images clustered around the notion of the awakening giant and brought vividly to life again by Mao Tse-tung’s ‘human sea’ seen flooding down across the Yalu, massed barbarians now armed not with broadswords but with artillery, tanks, and jet planes.⁴⁷

The prevalence of either of these images at any given time has largely depended on circumstances. As Isaacs put it, “these two sets of images rise and fall, move in and out of the center of people’s minds over time, never wholly displacing each other, always coexisting, each ready to emerge at the fresh call of circumstance, always new, yet instantly garbed in all the words and pictures of a much-written literature, made substantial and unique in each historic instance by the reality of recurring experience.”⁴⁸ As a result, as numerous authors have pointed out, “American attitudes toward China have undergone regular cycles of romanticism and cynicism, of idealization and disdain.”⁴⁹

⁴⁶ Lampton, *Same Bed, Different Dreams*, 257. For a broad, historical discussion of Western images of China, see Colin Mackerras, *Western Images of China*, rev. ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

⁴⁷ Harold R. Isaacs, *Scratches on Our Minds: American Images of China and India* (New York: The John Day Company, 1958), 63-4.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 64.

⁴⁹ Jianwei Wang, *Limited Adversaries: Post-Cold War Sino-American Mutual Images* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 12. See also Isaacs, *Scratches on Our Minds*; Stanley Karnow, “Changing (Mis)Conceptions of China,” in *The American Image of China*, ed. Benson Lee Grayson (New York: Frederick Ungar, 1979); and Steven W. Mosher, *China Misperceived: American Illusions and Chinese Reality* (New York: Basic Books, 1990). It should be noted that some argue that American views of China have been more consistently negative since the

This cyclical change can be at least partly attributed to a lack of knowledge about China that often leads to gross simplifications. As Nancy Tucker correctly points out, the American public's "ignorance about foreign affairs generally and about Asia in particular" is an important factor influencing US images of China.⁵⁰ Even when existing images are shattered by changing circumstances and/or new information, they are often simply replaced by new simplifications. For instance, early American images of China "as a great, ancient, and exotic culture devoted to the arts and sciences" were quickly replaced by images of China as a 'backward' country as contact between the two cultures increased during the 19th century.⁵¹ After China began to open up in the 1970s, Stanley Karnow lamented the poor quality of Western reporting about it, observing that "having frequently magnified the Communist regime's shortcomings in the past as they assessed China from afar, on-the-spot American observers now appear to be leaping to the other extreme of portraying the country in nothing but euphoric prose."⁵² Yet as Harry Harding points out, China's new openness eventually helped to dispel such "naïve euphoria," bringing about new criticisms of its reforms.⁵³ These wide shifts in American images have produced changes in the counter-role the United States has sought to cast on China. For the purposes of this dissertation, it is necessary to examine the most recent such change, and its effects on US policy toward China.

Shattering the Liberal China Myth: Tiananmen Square & America's Changing Counter-Role

In order to understand the dramatic nature of the change in the counter-role the United States sought to impose on China in the 1990s, it is first necessary to consider the counter-role that had prevailed until then. Richard Madsen has argued that, at least since the 1970s, America's conception of its own role in the world as a champion of democracy and the free market gave rise to a 'liberal China myth' that

Communist takeover in 1949. For instance, see Rey Chow, "King Kong in Hong Kong: Watching the 'Handover' from the U.S.A.," *Social Text* 16, no. 2 (Summer 1998): 93-108.

⁵⁰ Tucker, "America First," 16.

⁵¹ John G. Stoessinger, *Nations at Dawn: China, Russia, and America*, 6th ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, Inc., 1994), 14. See also Mosher, *China Misperceived*, 35-9; and Warren I. Cohen, "American Perceptions of China, 1789-1911," in *China in the American Political Imagination*, ed. Carola McGiffert (Washington: The CSIS Press, 2003).

⁵² Karnow, "Changing (Mis)Conceptions of China," 284-85.

⁵³ Harry Harding, *A Fragile Relationship: The United States and China since 1972* (Washington: The Brookings Institution, 1992), 201.

“portrayed China as a troubled modernizer.”⁵⁴ According to this myth, the threat of communism represented only a temporary challenge to the eventual victory of Western/American ideals, since these ideals represented “the inevitable expression of modernity itself. As Communist China modernized, its leaders and citizens would learn to follow this [American] dream.”⁵⁵ Chinese attempts at modernization and economic reform that began in the late-1970s were seen as evidence of China’s progress toward the acceptance of Western economic and political norms. As Thomas Dorogi puts it, “many Americans deeply believed that once China opened its doors to the United States and liberal thinking, the system of Maoism and central economic planning would slowly wither away.”⁵⁶ In some sense, this has played out – China’s shift to ‘market socialism’ represents a significant degree of economic liberalization and decay in communist ideology. Yet within the context of the liberal China myth, this represents but a small step in China’s path toward becoming the “land of liberty, pluralism, private ownership, and free markets”⁵⁷ envisioned by hopeful American observers.

This myth represented an effort by the United States to impose a counter-role on China that fit with its own role in the world. As such, it provided a way to interpret the dramatic changes going on in China, as well as a set of expectations about how China would and *should* develop – namely, it would become more Westernized. Perhaps more importantly, it provided a prescription for US China policy – “Americans should help the process of modernization along by becoming actively engaged with China economically, politically, and culturally.”⁵⁸ Although different variants of such an engagement strategy have been suggested,⁵⁹ each has been based on the same, inherently liberal, rationale – “that China’s integration into global trading and financial systems will gradually but inexorably moderate the behavior

⁵⁴ Richard Madsen, *China and the American Dream: A Moral Inquiry* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 28. It should be noted that Madsen argues that this myth was never universally accepted, and only became predominant after beating out, but not wholly replacing two others – the myth of China as Red Menace and the myth of China as revolutionary redeemer. See Madsen, 29.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 28.

⁵⁶ Thomas Laszlo Dorogi, *Tainted Perceptions: Liberal-Democracy and American Popular Images of China* (Lanham: University Press of America, Inc., 2001), 18.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 18.

⁵⁸ Madsen, *China and the American Dream*, 28.

⁵⁹ Robert Ross identifies three such variants – bilateral accommodation, multilateral accommodation, and societal entanglement. See Robert S. Ross, “Engagement in US China Policy,” in *Engaging China: The Management of an Emerging Power*, ed. Alastair Iain Johnston and Robert S. Ross (London: Routledge, 1999).

of the People's Republic of China.”⁶⁰ As Gerald Segal put it, “China can be neutered as a challenge to the status quo, by giving it incentives to join regional and global society.”⁶¹ By tying China into the international system, interdependence would make it increasingly unlikely that it would disrupt regional security. China would eventually become a responsible actor on the world stage. An underlying assumption of this belief was that ‘responsible’ included the eventual transition from communism to democracy. This is not to say that the active promotion of political reform in China was a high priority in US policy. Indeed, Dorogi argues that trade remained America’s predominant interest in dealing with China. Yet “for the most part, the ideological rhetoric and the images of China reinforced this notion of positive trade relations and the idea that economic liberalization in China would eventually lead to political reform.”⁶² As Lampton puts it, engagement with China could “bring both economic benefit [for the United States] and moral purification [for China].”⁶³

However, as Madsen points out, “like all the stories we use to understand our national identity and purpose, the central American story about China did more than simply reflect empirically verifiable facts – it also imposed a socially constructed vision upon the ambiguities of historical experience. It is as much about America as about China; it construed American relations with China in terms of common understandings of the core values of American society.”⁶⁴ As such, the liberal China myth was more a reflection of America’s faith in its own place in the world than an accurate portrayal of Chinese reality. Even if modernization and reform could bring about democratization in the long-term (a position supported by the author), the simplistic way in which this process was often characterized provided enormous opportunity for disappointment in the event that China took a significant step backward. All that was needed to get the pendulum to swing back toward a more malevolent and threatening image was, as Isaacs put it, a ‘fresh call of circumstances’ that could shatter the myth that it was somehow steadily

⁶⁰ James Shinn, “Conditional Engagement with China,” in *Weaving the Net: Conditional Engagement with China*, ed. James Shinn (New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 1996), 3–4.

⁶¹ Gerald Segal, “East Asia and the ‘Constrainment’ of China,” *International Security* 20, no. 4 (Spring 1996): 107.

⁶² Dorogi, *Tainted Perceptions*, 3.

⁶³ Lampton, *Same Bed, Different Dreams*, 258.

⁶⁴ Madsen, *China and the American Dream*, 28.

progressing toward a more democratic future. This came in the spring of 1989 with the crackdown on pro-democracy demonstrators in Tiananmen Square.⁶⁵ As Lampton points out, “the violence of Tiananmen served as a catalyst for change.”⁶⁶

The Tiananmen Incident began with the death on April 15, 1989 of Hu Yaobang, the former CCP General Secretary who had been ousted in 1987 for his support of student demonstrations. His death prompted a new, and far larger, wave of demonstrations that quickly turned into a student-led mass movement with widespread public support. Although the students’ main grievances centered on issues of job insecurity, lack of free speech, and complaints about official corruption, the demonstrations were saturated with the rhetoric of democracy, with calls for political reform and dialogue with party leaders. The CCP leadership’s attempt to get the students to back down by issuing a stern warning in the party’s official mouth-piece, the *People’s Daily*, on April 26, backfired by prompting a still-larger demonstration and march to Tiananmen Square the next day. Divisions within the CCP leadership over how to deal with the situation, as well as poor organization on the part of the students in putting forward a clear set of demands, produced a stalemate. By mid-May, the situation had worsened significantly, with large numbers of more radical students going on a hunger strike and the government frustrated with its inability to get the students out of the square in time for a summit with Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev. The May 19 decision to impose martial law did nothing to end the crisis, with thousands of Beijing residents taking to the streets to block the movement of troops to the square. Though the PLA initially stood down, it returned on the night of June 3-4 and forced the students to leave Tiananmen Square. Clashes between protesters and the military resulted in the deaths of several hundred Beijing residents and students, as well as a few soldiers.

The events in Tiananmen Square had a powerful impact on the US image of China. This was largely due to what has been called ‘the CNN effect’ – “a complex reality in which powerful, real-time

⁶⁵ Lampton, *Same Bed, Different Dreams*, 258. As already noted, Tiananmen has been cited as a major cause of the shift in American attitudes towards China by numerous authors. Lampton is cited because of his specific use of Isaacs’ terminology that is borrowed here.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 2.

images of unfolding human events and tragedy are potentially directed into every electrified home in the world, setting off demands for a policy response by governments, markets, and multinational organizations globally.”⁶⁷ Media coverage of the student demonstrations and the government crackdown was extensive, with images of the students’ passionate calls for democracy being broadcast live around the world. It is difficult to overestimate the influence such images had on American public opinion. Prior to Tiananmen Square, almost 75% of the American public had favorable views of China. By July that number had dropped to 33%, with 58% having unfavorable views of it. Similarly, the proportion of the public that considered China a close friend or ally of the United States dropped from 25% in May 1988 to 16% in July 1989. More importantly, the proportion viewing China as an enemy more than doubled, from 19% to 39%.⁶⁸ Such an effect would not be short-term either. As Lampton points out, the images “did more than create a sense of human identification between those in Tiananmen Square and viewers around the world – they provided images so memorable that they are still used repeatedly as lead-in footage to news and documentary broadcasts more than a decade after the events themselves.”⁶⁹ Scenes of students erecting the ‘Goddess of Democracy’ (based on the Statue of Liberty) in Tiananmen Square or of a lone man standing in the way of a column of tanks in the days after the crackdown became indelible reminders of China’s failed attempt to throw off the chains of communism.

Of course, this represents a rather romanticized interpretation of events. The reality surrounding the Tiananmen Incident was far more complex than generally portrayed by the Western media. The students were far more divided in their goals and less committed to the Western concept of democracy than it appeared to the casual observer. At the same time, the actions of the government, though difficult to excuse, were less cold-blooded than initial reports indicated.⁷⁰ Yet “policy makers and the media

⁶⁷ Ibid., 264.

⁶⁸ Harding, *A Fragile Relationship*, 240-43.

⁶⁹ Lampton, *Same Bed, Different Dreams*, 265.

⁷⁰ Early reports that students had been gunned down and run over by tanks in Tiananmen Square itself were largely false, though they have continued to shape popular opinion of the incident. In addition, early estimates that put the death toll at over 4,000 are now generally seen as exaggerated. For an excellent, balanced look at the events of 1989, see *The Gate of Heavenly Peace*, VHS, directed by Richard Gordon and Carma Hinton (San Francisco: NAATA/Distribution, 1997).

refused to look past the blood that had been spilled in Beijing to ascertain the true nature of the incident.”⁷¹ They saw what they wanted to see – a Chinese public struggling to attain Western-style democracy against an oppressive communist state. As Representative Mickey Edwards (R-Oklahoma) stated after the crackdown: “Diplomatic messages of disapproval are a pretty puny reaction to the murdering of innocent civilians whose only crime is to want the same basic freedoms we in the West take for granted.”⁷² As a result of this misunderstanding about the nature of the incident, “a skewed impression of these two tumultuous months was presented to the public, with only minimal information about the deeper political, social, and cultural elements of the Tiananmen fiasco.”⁷³ Without the necessary “contextual knowledge,” the negative media coverage of these events had “an inherently distorting effect” on the public’s image of China.⁷⁴ It helped to feed the latent image of China (or at least of its government) as a malevolent political force.

Yet it was not just that information about what occurred was distorted or inaccurate (which it certainly was) that affected the public image of China; it was that the information completely contradicted American expectations.⁷⁵ After all, 1989 was the beginning of ‘the end of history.’⁷⁶ Communism was giving way to democracy in states around the world. The fall of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe just a few months after the military crackdown in Tiananmen provided a stark contrast to China’s actions against peaceful student demonstrators. Thus, what made the events of Tiananmen Square so shocking to the American public and policy-makers was that they so strongly contradicted what the United States knew (or thought it knew) about China and how it would inevitably develop. As Madsen puts it, “the crackdown in China was for Americans a drama with an unexpected,

⁷¹ Dorogi, *Tainted Perceptions*, 34.

⁷² Cited in Robert L. Suettinger, *Beyond Tiananmen: The Politics of U.S.-China Relations, 1989-2000* (Washington: Brookings Institution Press, 2003), 66.

⁷³ Dorogi, *Tainted Perceptions*, 34.

⁷⁴ Lampton, *Same Bed, Different Dreams*, 278.

⁷⁵ Zi Zhongyun, “The Clash of Ideas: Ideology and Sino-U.S. Relations,” in *Chinese Foreign Policy: Pragmatism and Strategic Behavior*, ed. Suisheng Zhao (Armonk: M. E. Sharpe, 2004), 240.

⁷⁶ This refers to Francis Fukuyama’s argument that the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe marked the final victory of Western democracy. See Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York: Avon Books, 1992).

incorrect ending.”⁷⁷ China was supposed to be moving forward toward democracy, not backward toward repression. It was this disconnect between expectations and events, not simply the events themselves, that, according to Madsen, explains the strong reaction of the United States. Tiananmen Square shattered the American image of China as a modernizing, and therefore *liberalizing*, state. It was now a reactionary state that sought to hold off the pace of political reform and prevent the final triumph of democracy, while at the same time profiting from its increasing contact with the world. As a result, “the sanguine vision of a democratic utopia for future China came tumbling down and was replaced by a more critical assessment of the PRC as an emerging economic power operating under an authoritarian political system.”⁷⁸

The rapid change in American perceptions represented an attempt to reconcile its role in the world with the now flawed counter-role that it had projected onto China for over a decade. The United States’ role as a champion of democracy and human rights remained unchanged. Indeed, the end of the Cold War and Soviet communism only served to validate it. At the same time, however, its counter-role of China as a modernizer was shattered by the events in Tiananmen Square; the liberal China myth proved to be just that. The United States thus had to rethink its understanding of China – i.e., it had to develop a new counter-role that could make sense of Chinese actions. This new counter-role was China as a *failed* modernizer and potential rogue. Rey Chow refers to this replacement for the liberal China myth as the ‘King Kong syndrome’ – a “structure of cross-cultural, cross-racial representation aimed at producing ‘China’ as a spectacular monster whose despotism necessitates the salvation of its people by outsiders.”⁷⁹ Along with the geopolitical changes brought about by the collapse of the Soviet Union, this change in counter-role would have a profound impact on Sino-US relations.

Dealing with a Failed Modernizer: America’s Changing Counter-Role & the Reorientation of US China Policy

As one might expect, the new counter-role of failed modernizer the United States sought to cast on China came into conflict with China’s own role as a great power. As Lampton notes, the combination

⁷⁷ Madsen, *China and the American Dream*, 4.

⁷⁸ Dorogi, *Tainted Perceptions*, 3.

⁷⁹ Chow, “King Kong in Hong Kong,” 94.

of victimhood and national pride inherent in this role “creates a sense of entitlement,”⁸⁰ one that was unlikely to be accommodated in light of its actions in Tiananmen Square. The result was a role conflict that would have serious repercussions for Sino-US relations. In order to appreciate the degree of that role conflict, it is necessary to address the reorientation of America’s post-Tiananmen China policy that came about as a result of its newly developed counter-role. In doing so, however, it is first necessary to note that US China policy since Tiananmen has by no means been consistent. It has been characterized by conflicting impulses for engagement and containment, enticement and punishment. This inconsistency can be largely attributed to the breakdown of the pre-Tiananmen consensus among American policy-makers regarding US China policy. As a result of the military crackdown, “formerly held assumptions, of which the trajectory of Chinese political and economic reform were the most pertinent, were cast aside while policy makers scrambled to digest the unexpected steps the CCP had taken to quell a possible social revolution.”⁸¹ That scramble inevitably sparked a political struggle over US relations with China.

The counter-role being discussed could therefore be seen as contested – the product of often intense political competition. This is to be expected. As products of social construction, roles and counter-roles require the actions of agents to produce, reproduce, and when necessary, change them. This includes *domestic* agents. As suggested in Chapter 2, if one is to apply constructivism to the problem of foreign policy analysis, it is necessary to recognize that while the international system and the states that compose it may mutually constitute each other, the same mutually constitutive relationship exists between the states themselves and the domestic political actors that compose them. This means that in analyzing any potential role conflict, one must be careful not to assume that a state’s role and counter-role are givens; they are just as dependent on social practice as any other construct. What this means in practical terms for analysis of the role conflict between the United States and China is that it is necessary to examine the internal debates over China policy in order to more fully understand the nature of the counter-role in question and the actions it produced.

⁸⁰ Lampton, *Same Bed, Different Dreams*, 251-52.

⁸¹ Dorogi, *Tainted Perceptions*, 38.

The initial struggle over US China policy centered on differences between the White House and Congress. The White House's initial reaction to the events of Tiananmen Square was decidedly cautious. In a statement released from his residence in Kennebunkport, Maine, President George H. W. Bush stated: "I deeply deplore the decision to use force against peaceful demonstrators and the consequent loss of life. We have been urging and continue to urge non-violence, restraint and dialogue. Tragically, another course has been chosen. Again, I urge a return to non-violent means for dealing with the current situation."⁸² To back up his somewhat mild words of condemnation, the administration quickly decided to suspend military-to-military contacts, as well as sales of military equipment, including avionics for the Chinese F-8 fighter plane, torpedoes, and counterartillery radar.⁸³ In addition, the United States sought to cut off international financial support to China, particularly from the World Bank, which had been scheduled to lend it some \$2.3 billion in the coming year, and encouraged others to do the same.⁸⁴ The administration also announced that it would consider requests from Chinese students studying in the United States to extend their stays, and allowed a leading Chinese dissident, astrophysicist Fang Lizhi, to take refuge in the US embassy in Beijing.

Despite these initial actions, however, the Bush administration remained concerned about their potential impact on Sino-US relations. While it understood that a failure to condemn the crackdown would inevitably lead to public and Congressional criticism, it still viewed China as an important strategic partner.⁸⁵ Moreover, the White House was unclear what was happening in China or who was in charge. Some hope remained that Chinese reformers would assert themselves and condemn the crackdown.⁸⁶ Yet even when it became clear that China's policy regarding the demonstrations was not about to change, the

⁸² Cited in Suettinger, *Beyond Tiananmen*, 66.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 67.

⁸⁴ Japan followed the American lead by suspending about \$5.6 billion in loans. See James Mann, *About Face: A History of America's Curious Relationship with China, from Nixon to Clinton* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1999), 197.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 195-98.

⁸⁶ This is an example of the 'liberal China' myth at work. Given the fact that CCP General Secretary Zhao Ziyang, a leading reformer, had been ousted from his position in the hours leading up to the crackdown, any hope that the Chinese leadership would recoil from the violence would seem overly optimistic. Paramount leader Deng Xiaoping (seen by many as a reformer) met with commanders of the martial law forces on June 9 and openly supported their actions, condemning the students for attempting to overthrow the party. Eleven of the demonstrators were given death sentences for their participation.

administration remained equivocal in its condemnation. Publicly, the administration hardened its position. On June 20, Secretary of State James Baker told Congress that he was recommending a suspension of high-level meetings between the two countries. Yet at the same time, the administration had already decided to secretly send National Security Advisor Brent Scowcroft and Deputy Secretary of State Lawrence Eagleburger to Beijing to meet with Deng Xiaoping personally, a meeting that took place at the end of June;⁸⁷ a second, more public visit by the two occurred in December. The administration also tried to soften many of the sanctions it had imposed. In early July, it allowed China to purchase four Boeing 757s, the sale of which had originally been banned due to their advanced navigation systems. It also allowed collaboration to continue between American engineers and Chinese military officers involving the design of an avionics package for the F-8. It was hoped that such actions would signal to the Chinese that the United States still valued their relationship.⁸⁸

The administration's attempt to placate potential critics and prevent a complete breakdown in Sino-US relations failed on both counts. Even before the military crackdown, the White House had been severely criticized for what some saw as "a lack of vision and a poverty of rhetoric" concerning China.⁸⁹ The Congress had demonstrated its support for the students by passing a concurrent resolution supporting democracy in China (H. Con. Res. 136); it passed in the Senate on May 31 by a vote of 89-0.⁹⁰ After the violence of June 3-4, the Congress put increasing pressure on the Bush administration to take stronger actions against China, with some even pushing the White House to break diplomatic relations with Beijing and recall the US ambassador.⁹¹ Representative Stephen Solarz (R-New York) warned: "If the president doesn't take the initiative in changing American policy in this regard, the Congress will do it for him."⁹² As the White House continued to pursue a more moderate approach to the situation, the Congress

⁸⁷ It should be noted that the Baker announcement halting high-level contacts was made without fully consulting the president. See Mann, *About Face*, 205-09.

⁸⁸ Harding, *A Fragile Relationship*, 228-29.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 230.

⁹⁰ The House did not pass it until June 6, 406-0. See Suettinger, *Beyond Tiananmen*, 65.

⁹¹ Patrick Tyler, *A Great Wall: Six Presidents and China: An Investigative History* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2000), 359.

⁹² Cited in Harding, *A Fragile Relationship*, 230.

did just that. The House and Senate passed an amendment to the Foreign Relations Authorization Act (418-0 at the end of June and 81-10 in mid-July, respectively) codifying the administration's initial sanctions and requiring the White House to show that the situation had improved, or that US national interests were at stake, before they could be removed. A later bill (H.R. 2712), sponsored by Representative Nancy Pelosi (D-California), which was more generous toward Chinese students studying in the United States, was vetoed by the administration, though most of its provisions were later included in a November 30 executive order. These Congressional calls for stronger action against China were largely supported by the American public, and helped to lay the groundwork for future tensions over a wide range of issues, particularly human rights, trade, and security.

To Link or Not to Link: Human Rights & Trade in Sino-US Relations

Although criticism had been made about China's human rights record before 1989, Tiananmen Square brought the issue to the forefront of the new debate over US China policy. Areas of contention included not only China's treatment of student demonstrators and other political dissidents, but also the effects of its 'one child policy' (e.g., forced abortions, female infanticide), its use of prison labor, and its treatment of ethnic and religious minorities (e.g., Tibetans, Christians). A detailed discussion of these issues is beyond the scope of this study. What is important, however, are the actions taken by the United States to pressure China into improving its human rights record, particularly the attempt to link this issue with trade. Almost immediately after the military crackdown in China, the US Congress began to discuss the possibility of using its burgeoning trade with the United States as a way of exerting pressure on the Chinese leadership to change its behavior. The legislation it passed in the summer of 1989 included recommendations for the White House to use further economic sanctions, such as opposing Chinese membership in the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) and revoking its most-favored nation (MFN) status, if the political situation in China continued to deteriorate.⁹³ The debate over

⁹³ Ibid., 233.

whether to link human rights and MFN status would become a defining element of Sino-US relations in the 1990s.

Until it was given permanent normal trade relations (PNTR) just prior to its accession to the World Trade Organization (WTO) on December 11, 2001, US law required that the extension of MFN status to China (and other non-market economies) had to be renewed annually.⁹⁴ Throughout the 1980s, this had been done almost automatically. The events in Tiananmen Square, however, changed that. Some discussion had been given to revoking China's MFN status immediately after the incident, but such proposals received little real consideration. However, with MFN due to expire on June 3, 1990, the first anniversary of the crackdown, it was perhaps inevitable that it would become a serious political issue. Congressional discussion of MFN began early in 1990 and continued despite the release of several hundred Chinese political prisoners, including Fang Lizhi (who had spent almost a year in the US embassy in Beijing). Although Congressional action did not come in time to prevent the Bush administration's June 3 decision to renew China's MFN status, three proposals did come up for a vote in the House on October 18, 1990 – one (H.J. Res. 647) called for immediate revocation of China's MFN status, while a second (H.R. 4939) called for strict conditions on renewal for the following year.⁹⁵ Although both passed by wide margins (247-174 and 384-30, respectively), neither bill went to the Senate for a vote before the end of the Congressional session. Efforts to attach conditionality to MFN renewal continued in 1991. The United States-China Act (H.R. 2212), sponsored by Nancy Pelosi, passed both houses of Congress (313-112 in the House, 55-44 in the Senate) but was vetoed by President Bush in February 1992. The Congress responded by quickly passing the China Most Favored Nation Trade Status Bill (H.R. 5318), sponsored by Representative Donald Pease (D-Ohio), which was again vetoed just two months before the 1992 presidential election.⁹⁶

When a new version of the United States-China Act (H.R. 1835) was introduced in April 1993, it got a warmer reception from a newly Democratic White House. While the Bush administration had

⁹⁴ This was a provision of the Jackson-Vanik amendment.

⁹⁵ The third, and most moderate one, was rejected.

⁹⁶ Harding, *A Fragile Relationship*, 265-69; Suettinger, *Beyond Tiananmen*, 108-10, 122, 134.

fought hard to renormalize relations with China after Tiananmen Square, and in particular opposed the linkage of human rights and MFN, the Clinton administration initially took a much tougher line toward China. Bill Clinton had criticized President Bush during the 1992 presidential campaign for ‘coddling dictators’ in Beijing and was more open to the possibility of using trade as leverage to force Chinese concessions on human rights. On May 28, 1993, President Clinton announced the signing of Executive Order 12850 – Conditions for Renewal of Most-Favored-Nation Status for the People’s Republic of China in 1994.⁹⁷ Although the executive order did not include many of the extraneous conditions (e.g., pure trade disputes, proliferation) that had been added to the Congressional bills, it marked a clear change in US policy regarding the linkage between human rights and trade. China’s MFN status would be renewed in 1993, but renewal again the following year would require that China provide greater emigration freedoms, halt the export of goods produced by prison labor, and make “overall, significant progress” in several areas, including adherence to the UN Declaration of Human Rights, release of political prisoners, permitting outside inspections of Chinese prisons by NGOs, protecting Tibetan culture, and permitting Voice of America broadcasts into China.⁹⁸

Despite the Clinton administration’s efforts to craft a policy of engagement for China, its decision to link human rights and trade remained a sore point in Sino-US relations. When President Clinton met with Jiang Zemin on November 19, 1993 during the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) conference in Seattle, he was admonished by the Chinese president for attempting to interfere in China’s domestic affairs.⁹⁹ China’s disgust over the situation did not end with words. A meeting in February 1994 between Assistant Secretary of State for Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs John Shattuck and Chinese dissident Wei Jingsheng prompted a series of arrests of prominent dissidents on the eve of Secretary of State Warren Christopher’s March trip to Asia. Although the Chinese offered some minor concessions at the end of Christopher’s trip, the overall encounter was marked by diplomatic rancor and

⁹⁷ The administration chose to use an executive order instead of Congressional legislation in order to regain executive control over China policy and convinced Congressional leaders to drop pending legislation.

⁹⁸ Suettinger, *Beyond Tiananmen*, 167.

⁹⁹ “Jiang’s Lecture: Clinton Gets Snubbed in Seattle,” *Far Eastern Economic Review*, December 2, 1993, 5.

was viewed by many as an abject failure.¹⁰⁰ Thus, by the spring of 1994, it had become increasingly clear that Sino-US relations were being seriously undermined by the administration's decision to link the renewal of China's MFN status with improvements in its human rights record.

Whether or not the US attempt to use trade as leverage over China's domestic behavior was (or could have been) effective is a question that is open to debate.¹⁰¹ However, during the Clinton administration's second year, US China policy abruptly changed direction. In addition to the diplomatic costs of pursuing human rights/MFN linkage, the administration faced increasingly vocal and organized opposition from business and economic interests that saw trade with China as vital. It also began to develop a new foreign policy strategy centered on the promotion of free trade that seriously undermined the rationale for linking human rights and MFN.¹⁰² On May 26, 1994, noting that China had made limited progress in improving its record on human rights, President Clinton announced his decision to officially 'delink' human rights and MFN, stating:

That linkage has been constructive during the past year. But I believe, based on our aggressive contacts with the Chinese in the past several months, that we have reached the end of the usefulness of that policy, and it is time to take a new path toward the achievement of our constant objectives. We need to place our relationship into a larger and more productive framework.¹⁰³

China's MFN status was renewed without conditions. However, the administration's decision to delink human rights and MFN did not make the issue go away. Annual attempts by some in Congress to withhold MFN status from China continued until it was finally extended PNTR in 2001. While none of these attempts succeeded, they did serve to keep the human rights issue alive by exerting political pressure on the Clinton administration in its dealings with China, and thereby on China as well.

¹⁰⁰ Suettinger, *Beyond Tiananmen*, 190.

¹⁰¹ Lampton suggests that the Chinese government, believing that US threats were not credible, was determined to resist pressure on human rights. Merle Goldman, on the other hand, has argued that US pressure did help to moderate China's treatment of dissidents. See Lampton, *Same Bed, Different Dreams*, 137; Merle Goldman, "The Importance of Human Rights in U.S. Policy toward China," in *Greater China and U.S. Foreign Policy: The Choice between Confrontation and Mutual Respect*, ed. Thomas A. Metzger and Ramon H. Myers (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1996), 76.

¹⁰² Mann, *About Face*, 294-96; and Suettinger, *Beyond Tiananmen*, 190-91.

¹⁰³ Cited in Suettinger, *Beyond Tiananmen*, 197.

The Congress's failure to use MFN status to force a change in Chinese behavior did not prevent it from expressing its concern for human rights in China in other ways. It publicly denounced China's effort to host the 2000 Summer Olympics, with the House passing a resolution against it (H.Res. 88) on July 26, 1993 (287-99) and the Senate sending a letter signed by 60 senators to the International Olympic Committee (IOC).¹⁰⁴ In addition, it took a strong stand on the issue of Tibet. In February 1995, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee passed legislation declaring Tibet "an occupied, and sovereign country."¹⁰⁵ Similar efforts were made by the House in May.¹⁰⁶ Though neither of these efforts had much real impact on formal US China policy,¹⁰⁷ they indicated a significant degree of hostility toward China on the part of a large number of US policy-makers that, along with the fight over MFN, helped to poison Sino-US relations throughout much of the 1990s.

The Rise of a New 'Peer Competitor': Security Issues in Sino-US Relations

While Tiananmen Square helped to bring human rights issues to the forefront of America's China policy, the collapse of the Soviet Union, as well as China's efforts at military modernization, introduced a new security dimension to the increasingly fragile relationship – the rise of China and the potential 'China Threat.' During the last decades of the Cold War, China had been an important (if informal) ally against the Soviet Union; it received significant military assistance from the United States throughout the 1980s.¹⁰⁸ With the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Union, a rethinking of that relationship was perhaps inevitable. Thomas Barnett suggests that, deprived of its old rival, the United States set out in search of a new 'peer competitor' that could justify its military budget and defense posture; China seemed to fit the bill.¹⁰⁹ Yet the effect that a changing image of China had on American

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 170.

¹⁰⁵ Tyler, *A Great Wall*, 414.

¹⁰⁶ Lampton, *Same Bed, Different Dreams*, 49.

¹⁰⁷ It is questionable whether the IOC's decision to give the 2000 Olympics to Sydney had anything to do with US Congressional disapproval.

¹⁰⁸ Most of the major joint arms programs were cancelled due to Tiananmen. See Bates Gill and Taeho Kim, *China's Arms Acquisitions from Abroad: A Quest for 'Superb and Secret Weapons'* SIPRI Research Report No. 11. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 41-3.

¹⁰⁹ Thomas P. M. Barnett, *The Pentagon's New Map: War and Peace in the Twenty-First Century* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 2004), 61-2.

calculations of its strategic interests should not be underestimated. The mere absence of another potential competitor was not enough to transform China into a security threat. It was a new interpretation of China's capabilities, seen through the lens of China as a reactionary state, that helped create the idea of the China Threat.

Early US security concerns about China, which began prior to Tiananmen, centered on its activities in proliferation. China had long been critical of arms control efforts, including the nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT), seeing them as attempts to maintain the military superiority of the superpowers. However, by the early 1990s, China had begun to accept international norms and agreements on preventing the proliferation of weapons. It signed the NPT and agreed to abide by the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR) in 1992, and signed the Chemical Weapons Convention in January 1993. Despite such outward moves in the right direction, reports of continued missile sales to Pakistan in 1992 resulted in significant Congressional pressure on the White House to take action. On August 5, 1993, the State Department imposed sanctions on China and threatened to expand them if it turned out that entire missiles (and not just parts and technology) had been shipped. At the same time, the United States and China were engaged in a dispute over a Chinese container ship, *Yin He*, which the United States believed was carrying chemicals to Iran that could be used for weapons. The United States eventually forced China to allow inspections of the ship and its cargo (carried out by Saudi Arabia, with advice from US experts), which turned up no evidence of the suspected chemicals. Chinese demands for a formal apology were turned down.¹¹⁰

Yet while the United States continued to have concerns about China's behavior in the area of proliferation, its attention soon shifted to China more generally. The first inclination that a strategic reorientation was occurring in US China policy came in a speech by National Security Adviser Anthony Lake on September 21, 1993.¹¹¹ Citing democracy and capitalism as the core values of the United States,

¹¹⁰ Suettinger, *Beyond Tiananmen*, 171-77.

¹¹¹ Anthony Lake, "From Containment to Engagement" (speech, Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies, Washington, DC, September 21, 1993). The main points of the speech were later reiterated in

Lake argued that “*the successor to a doctrine of containment must be a strategy of enlargement – enlargement of the world’s free community of market democracies.*”¹¹² While this might initially appear to be a relatively benign statement suggesting a desire to develop more cooperative relations to replace the confrontations of the Cold War, the context in which it was presented hinted at a harder edge to the proposed policy of enlargement. Lake went on to suggest that “we should expect the advance of democracy and markets to trigger forceful reactions from those whose power is not popularly derived.”¹¹³ In particular, he warned of ‘backlash states’ that could threaten the security of the United States and other democratic states, and which therefore had to be isolated “diplomatically, militarily, economically, and technologically.”¹¹⁴ Although he recognized China’s move towards economic liberalization, and emphasized the importance of maintaining good relations with it, Lake seemed to lump China together with rogue states like Iran, Iraq, and North Korea. As such, he seemed to be signaling a significant downgrading of China’s status relative to the United States – from strategic ally to potentially disruptive rogue.

At the same time, many policy-makers and China-watchers began to take notice of China’s increasing capabilities. In 1992, the World Bank reported that the Chinese economy was already the second largest economy in the world next to the United States if measured in terms of purchasing power parity (PPP), and could surpass the United States by 2020. Soon after, publications began to appear speculating that such economic growth could lay the foundation necessary for China to become a superpower.¹¹⁵ In conjunction with continued efforts at military modernization, many believed that this could make China a significant threat to regional security.¹¹⁶ The resulting debate over “how best to deal

an article in *Foreign Affairs*. See Anthony Lake, “Confronting Backlash States,” *Foreign Affairs* 73, no. 2 (March/April 1994): 45-55.

¹¹² Lake, “From Containment to Engagement.”

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ For instance, see William H. Overholt, *The Rise of China: How Economic Reform is Creating a New Superpower* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1993).

¹¹⁶ For instance, see Denny Roy, “Hegemon on the Horizon?: China’s Threat to East Asian Security,” *International Security* 19, no. 1 (Summer 1994): 149-68.

with the awakened dragon...spawned a lucrative cottage industry among analysts and pundits in academia, corporations, banks, governments, and the media worldwide.”¹¹⁷

While such concerns could certainly find support from various theories of international politics,¹¹⁸ the debate over the China Threat was heavily influenced by US domestic politics. With a Republican-controlled Congress facing off against a Democratic president, China policy became a wedge issue, particularly after the Republicans failed to win back the White House in 1996.¹¹⁹ Accusations of impropriety on the part of the Clinton administration involving campaign contributions from questionable sources with links to China only served to intensify these partisan divisions and increase anti-China sentiment among American conservatives.¹²⁰ Revelations of Chinese espionage activities aimed at acquiring US military, and particularly nuclear, technology added to the feeling that China was now a major adversary that had to be contained.¹²¹ Such sentiments were expressed throughout the 1990s in a whole series of highly alarmist books extolling the threat posed by China to the United States.¹²² While many of these concerns about the China Threat were based on suppositions about the future, the 1995-96 Taiwan Strait crisis seemed to give them real substance.

The Makings of a Crisis: Policy Reorientation & Taiwan

The reorientation of American China policy had a significant impact on how the United States dealt with the issue of Taiwan. The strategic necessities of maintaining good relations with the PRC during the latter part of the Cold War had forced the United States to distance itself from its long-time

¹¹⁷ David Shambaugh, “Containment or Engagement of China?: Calculating Beijing’s Responses,” *International Security* 21, no. 2 (Fall 1996): 180.

¹¹⁸ Herbert Yee and Ian Storey, “Introduction,” in *The China Threat: Perceptions, Myths and Reality*, ed. Herbert Yee and Ian Storey (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2002), 6-10.

¹¹⁹ Lampton, *Same Bed, Different Dreams*, 262-63.

¹²⁰ For instance, see Rich Lowry, “China Syndrome,” *National Review*, 24 March 1997, 38-40; and Edward Timperlake and William C. Triplett II, *Year of the Rat: How Bill Clinton and Al Gore Compromised U.S. Security for Chinese Cash* (Washington: Regnery Publishing, Inc., 2000).

¹²¹ See House Select Committee, *U.S. National Security and Military/Commercial Concerns with the People’s Republic of China*, 105th Cong., 2d sess., 1999, H. Rep. 105-851.

¹²² For instance, see Richard Bernstein and Ross H. Munro, *The Coming Conflict with China* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1997); Edward Timperlake and William C. Triplett II, *Red Dragon Rising: Communist China’s Military Threat to America* (Washington: Regnery Publishing, Inc., 1999); Steven W. Mosher, *Hegemon: China’s Plan to Dominate Asia and the World* (San Francisco: Encounter Books, 2000); Bill Gertz, *The China Threat: How the People’s Republic Targets America* (Washington: Regnery Publishing, Inc., 2002);

ally. Yet the breakdown in Sino-US relations, as well as the democratization of Taiwan, helped to reverse this trend. Of course, it must be noted that the question of how to deal with Taiwan after the normalization of relations with China in 1979 had long been an open one. Many in Congress had been dissatisfied with the terms of normalization, resulting in the overwhelming passage of the Taiwan Relations Act (1979), which allowed for the continued sales of arms to Taiwan and stated that “any effort to determine the future of Taiwan by other than peaceful means, including by boycotts or embargoes, [would be considered] a threat to the peace and security of the Western Pacific area and a grave concern to the United States.”¹²³ The Reagan administration flirted with the idea of resuming relations with Taiwan, and even the relatively pro-China Bush administration decided to sell 150 F-16s to Taiwan in 1992 in spite of earlier US assurances that it would reduce, and eventually halt weapons sales to the island.¹²⁴ Such issues had long been obstacles to smooth relations between the United States and China. However, it was not until the Clinton administration took office in 1993 that the Taiwan issue would become a major problem.

As already mentioned, Clinton had been highly critical during the 1992 presidential campaign of the Bush administration’s efforts to maintain reasonably good relations with China. One of his first foreign policy actions was to initiate a policy review to revise the highly restrictive procedures under which the United States conducted its unofficial relations with Taiwan. The Taiwan Policy Review was released in September 1994, just months after the administration’s decision to delink human rights and MFN.¹²⁵ The name of Taiwan’s unofficial representative office in Washington was changed from the non-descript Coordinating Council on North American Affairs (CCNAA) to the Taipei Economic and Cultural Representative Office (TECRO). Restrictions on contacts between officials were relaxed, allowing Taiwanese officials to meet with their American counterparts in their offices (excluding the

¹²³ Kerry Dumbaugh, “Taiwan: Texts of the Taiwan Relations Act, and the U.S.-China Communiqués, and the Six Assurances,” in *Taiwan-China: A Most Ticklish Standoff*, ed. Adam W. Clarke (Huntington: Novinka Books, 2001), 2.

¹²⁴ The latter decision was prompted by political considerations during an election year.

¹²⁵ The political fight over MFN had resulted in the State Department temporarily shelving the original draft of the review.

State Department and the Executive Office of the President) and allowing American officials in Taiwan to meet with the president and other high-level officials in their offices. A regular dialogue was established between subcabinet officials regarding economic relations. Cabinet-level meetings would also be allowed on economic and technical issues. The United States agreed to support Taiwanese membership in the GATT, as well as other international organizations that would not require statehood for membership. Finally, top Taiwanese officials would be allowed to make 'transit stops' in the United States, but would still not be allowed to make personal or official visits.¹²⁶

While the new policy was intended to be a pragmatic adjustment in US policy, both Beijing and Taipei criticized it, the former for going too far and the latter for not going far enough. Not surprisingly, the Chinese were particularly critical of the policy changes, with Vice Foreign Minister Liu Huaqiu calling it "'gross interference' in China's internal affairs and a 'serious infringement' of China's sovereignty."¹²⁷ Perhaps more importantly, it still did not meet Congressional expectations. For one thing, high-level Taiwanese leaders were still prohibited from visiting the United States, even unofficially. By the time the Taiwan Policy Review was released, this had become a major political issue. In keeping with his attempts at 'vacation diplomacy' (see Chapter 6), Taiwanese President Lee Teng-hui had sought to use unofficial visits to the United States to increase Taiwan's diplomatic profile. During a refueling stopover in Hawaii on his way to Central America in May 1994, Lee had not been allowed to stay overnight (and play a round of golf), nor even leave the airport. While he was permitted to deplane at a transit lounge at Hickham Air Force Base, Lee instead decided to make a political statement by refusing to get off the plane, prompting a widely-held myth on Capitol Hill that the State Department had not allowed him to deplane at all.¹²⁸ The failure of the Taiwan Policy Review to adequately address this issue was strongly criticized by Congress.

The increasing Congressional dissatisfaction with the administration's policy toward Taiwan presented Lee with an opportunity. While it was prevented from dealing directly with the White House,

¹²⁶ Suettinger, *Beyond Tiananmen*, 205-07.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 207.

¹²⁸ Lampton, *Same Bed, Different Dreams*, 47; Tyler, *A Great Wall*, 414.

the Taiwanese government was able to actively lobby the Congress to promote its interests, which it began to do with renewed vigor in the summer of 1994. In particular, Lee sought to gain permission from the US government to visit Cornell University, his alma mater. Besides the large sums of money it spent on its lobbying efforts (including a three-year, \$4.5 million contract with Washington firm, Cassidy & Associates),¹²⁹ the Taiwanese government's task was made easier by "widespread admiration for Taiwan's economic prowess and for the democratic development that had taken place under Lee,"¹³⁰ which put Taiwan in marked contrast to China's continued repression. In addition, the new Republican-controlled Congress that took office in January 1995 saw the issue of Taiwan as an opportunity to put political pressure on the Clinton administration.¹³¹ House Speaker Newt Gingrich (R-Georgia) not only openly supported allowing Lee to visit the United States, a move also supported by House International Relations Committee Chairman Benjamin Gilman (R-New York) and former Secretary of State James Baker, but even stated that Taiwan deserved to be readmitted to the UN. In May 1995, the House and Senate voted overwhelmingly (390-0 and 97-1, respectively) in favor of a nonbinding resolution supporting giving Lee a visa to visit the United States. While the Clinton administration had initially promised China that it would deny a visa to Lee, it bowed to Congressional pressure and announced its reversal on May 22.

As discussed in Chapter 6, the Chinese reacted to this reversal by initiating a series of military exercises intended to intimidate Taiwan and make its displeasure clear to the United States. In keeping with the US policy of strategic ambiguity, the Clinton administration tried to walk a fine line between expressing its concerns over China's aggressive stance toward Taiwan and smoothing relations with it. The White House did not take a strong stance, in part, because "U.S. foreign policy makers concluded that Chinese leaders understood the U.S. position well enough, that further reiteration would have been unnecessary and provocative, and that it was best left implicit and unsaid in the tense atmosphere of mid-

¹²⁹ Mann, *About Face*, 320.

¹³⁰ Suettinger, *Beyond Tiananmen*, 213.

¹³¹ Mann also notes that the Republican victory in 1994 "brought to Washington scores of new members who had no connection to the China policies of the previous two decades." Mann, *About Face*, 320.

1995.”¹³² However, its measured response to China’s intimidation of democratic Taiwan evoked severe criticism from Congress. On January 31, a Sense of Congress resolution was introduced “calling on the president to condemn China’s military intimidation of Taiwan and to report to Congress on how the United States could defend Taiwan against a Chinese ballistic missile attack.”¹³³ It was at least partly this political pressure that led the Clinton administration to ratchet up its statements of concern regarding Chinese actions, and to deploy the *Independence* and *Nimitz* battle groups to the region.

The fact that the Taiwan Strait crisis ended peacefully did little to reassure those that saw China as the United States’ next peer competitor. Indeed, while discussion about the possibility that China might become a threat to US interests had begun a few years before, Dorogi argues that “the Taiwan crisis cemented fears in the minds of Americans that China might become the successor to the Soviet Union as the next major international adversary of the United States.”¹³⁴ Much as Tiananmen Square had shattered the image of China as a liberal modernizer, the Taiwan Strait crisis helped to solidify the growing image that China was a dangerous, potentially expansionist state that needed to be contained. The fact that China did not actually attack Taiwan, and indeed had not even mobilized the forces necessary for such an attempt to be made, made little difference to many US policy-makers as “an image of China as a rising communist giant captured the American psyche.”¹³⁵

Before going on to discuss China’s reaction to the reorientation in China policy, it should be noted that despite it, the growing anti-China sentiment in public opinion, and the belief by many in a China Threat, the counter-role that the United States seeks to cast on China remains contested. The argument for engagement that had been a cornerstone of the liberal China myth still remains part of “the establishment position.”¹³⁶ Many (including the author) still hold to the notion that China will become less threatening, and more reformist, as it becomes more intertwined in an increasingly globalized world.

¹³² John W. Garver, *Face Off: China, the United States, and Taiwan’s Democratization* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1997), 77.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 98.

¹³⁴ Dorogi, *Tainted Perceptions*, 50.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 65.

¹³⁶ Ellen Bork, “Challenging the Establishment Image of China,” in *China in the American Political Imagination*, ed. Carola McGiffert (Washington: The CSIS Press, 2003), 52.

However, it cannot be denied that, in the decade and a half since Tiananmen Square, this position has come under increasing attack from those who see engagement as appeasement of an immoral and potentially dangerous adversary. The US counter-role is thus not one dimensional; it did not change completely from one mode to another. It has been constructed through a long process of political debate that is ongoing. Yet while this counter-role may be a work in progress, it is equally clear that it conflicts with China's own role as a victimized great power.

As already discussed, great power status is about more than just material capabilities or an ability to threaten; it involves a certain measure of respect and acceptance from other great powers. The pursuit of international respect has thus become a major theme of Chinese foreign policy. Yet respect is precisely what the Chinese feel is most lacking in their relationship with the United States. For China, it was a cruel irony that just as its reform efforts were fulfilling the promise of great power status by putting it on track to become one of the world's largest, most dynamic economies (not to mention the potential this might provide for enhancing China's efforts at military modernization), the United States began a wholesale reorientation of its policy toward it. Instead of accepting China's growing importance in international politics and treating it as an equal, the United States after 1989 began to treat it as a near-pariah, little better than the rogue states it sought to contain through diplomatic isolation, economic sanctions, and occasional military chastisement. The fact that this counter-role was politically contested did little to soften its impact on the Chinese. For them, it was an objective social fact. The United States thus wound up, as Yuan Peng puts it, "on the wrong side of Chinese history."¹³⁷ It was this disconnect between China's rise to prominence and the US reaction to it – i.e., this role conflict – that helped to spark a nationalist backlash in China, and set the stage for Sino-US confrontation.

‘China Can Say No’: Sino-US Role Conflict & the Rise of China’s ‘New Nationalism’

The final step in applying the reactive model of nationalism to Sino-US relations is to analyze the effect of the Sino-US role conflict on Chinese foreign policy. In doing so, it should be noted once again

¹³⁷ Yuan Peng, "Chinese Perceptions of U.S. Attitudes," in *China in the American Political Imagination*, ed. Carola McGiffert (Washington: The CSIS Press, 2003), 109.

that the post-Tiananmen deterioration in Sino-US relations could be attributed to the shift from bipolarity to unipolarity or to some changes in domestic politics. Just as the post-Cold War change in the distribution of power made China less important to the United States, so it could be expected to make China more wary of a superpower that could threaten its interests. Indeed, China's discomfort with the idea of a unipolar world has already been discussed. In addition, just as the events of Tiananmen Square produced political debate in the United States over China policy, the domestic aftermath of Tiananmen Square for China might be expected to produce political discord that could influence the China's US policy. Yet to view the deterioration of Sino-US relations in the 1990s as merely an inevitable and logical outcome of new strategic conditions brought about by changes in the global balance of power is to miss the real substance of the change in question – namely, the rising nationalism and anti-Americanism that appeared in China in the 1990s. Similarly, as will be demonstrated, this rise of nationalism cannot be attributed solely to domestic politics. To treat it as purely instrumental risks overlooking its emotional and often spontaneous nature. The solution to this problem, as has been suggested throughout, is to treat this rise in nationalism as a reaction to an ideational threat posed by the role conflict already discussed.

As with the change in the US counter-role discussed earlier, the rise of anti-American nationalism has simply been the most recent of a long series of pendulum swings in Chinese attitudes toward the United States. Indeed, Chinese attitudes toward the United States have gone through the same 'cycles of romanticism and cynicism, idealization and disdain' as have US attitudes toward China, with positive and negative views of the United States never fully replacing the other. For China, the United States is 'the beautiful imperialist,' a term David Shambaugh coined that "nicely captures the ambivalence – admiration and denigration – that distinguishes Chinese perceptions of the United States."¹³⁸ While the United States participated in the forced opening of China in the 19th century, Yuan Peng suggests that "Chinese perceptions of the United States are relatively good, especially compared with Chinese images of Russia and the European powers. Chinese generally view the United States as engaging in 'good

¹³⁸ David Shambaugh, *Beautiful Imperialist: China Perceives America, 1972-1990* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), 3.

imperialism' rather than the 'bad imperialism' that was practiced by the Europeans."¹³⁹ The United States has often been admired for its prosperity and political openness, as well as the assistance it rendered during China's war with Japan. In fact, after the thaw in Sino-US relations in the 1970s, many students and intellectuals saw the United States as a model to be emulated.¹⁴⁰ Today, Yuan suggests that the younger generation in China "can generally be classified as 'pro-American.' Deeply influenced by McDonald's, the NBA, Microsoft, Hollywood, and American advanced education, Chinese youth admire the United States."¹⁴¹

At the same time, however, the Chinese have not been blind to the fact that US actions toward China have often been less than principled. What the United States may see as benevolence is often interpreted by China as intended to extract benefits in a time of weakness. As Lampton summarizes about differences between US and Chinese views of their pre-1949 relations:

The predominant view in the United States has been that American missionary involvement in China from the early 1800s until the communist takeover in 1949 was largely a philanthropic and humanitarian undertaking that left behind many enduring legacies, particularly in the educational and medical fields; Chinese point to the patronizing aspect of such missionary work. Americans assert they never had 'treaty ports' in China; the Chinese remember that Washington did not relinquish extraterritoriality until 1943. Americans see their Open Door Policy dating from 1899-1900 as an attempt to prevent China from being carved up into commercially impenetrable foreign colonies; Chinese believe that the Americans were more concerned about maintaining their own commercial access and having the privileges that extraterritoriality conferred. While Americans view their 'nonrecognition' of Japanese aggression in China during the 1930s as standing up for China's territorial integrity, Chinese see inaction until 1941.¹⁴²

Yuan notes that while today's Chinese youth may be fascinated by the United States, "these young students can also be labeled as 'anti-American' and 'Chinese nationalists.' Whenever Sino-U.S. relations become tense, such as after the 1999 bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade or the plane collision

¹³⁹ Yuan, "Chinese Perceptions of U.S. Attitudes," 108.

¹⁴⁰ Zi, "The Clash of Ideas," 239. Although this thaw in Sino-US relations was initially predicated on strategic considerations, Jianwei Wang and Zhimin Lin suggest that positive feelings toward the United States became institutionalized. See Jianwei Wang and Zhimin Lin, "Chinese Perceptions in the Post-Cold War Era: Three Images of the United States," *Asian Survey* 32 (October 1992): 902.

¹⁴¹ Yuan, "Chinese Perceptions of U.S. Attitudes," 106.

¹⁴² Lampton, *Same Bed, Different Dreams*, 253. For an analysis of Chinese perceptions of the United States following WWII, see Hong Zhang, *America Perceived: The Making of Chinese Images of the United States, 1945-1953* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2002).

in 2001, it is young college students who rush to the American embassy to stage protests.”¹⁴³ It is the development of this reactive Chinese nationalism that will be addressed in the rest of this chapter.

Numerous scholars and observers of China have noted “the remarkable resurgence of Chinese nationalism” in the years after Tiananmen Square,¹⁴⁴ what has been referred to as China’s ‘new nationalism.’ This had two main sources – one official and intentional, one public and spontaneous.¹⁴⁵ With respect to the former, for much of the Chinese leadership, the Tiananmen demonstrations were the direct result of ideological drift characterized by three ‘crises of faith’ (*sanxin weiji*) – a crisis of faith in socialism (*xinxin weiji*), a crisis of faith in Marxism (*xinyang weiji*), and a crisis of faith in the CCP (*xinren weiji*). In essence, “the ‘Tiananmen Incident’ could be seen as a result of the bankruptcy of the official ideology”¹⁴⁶ and the party’s inability to deal with the socioeconomic problems associated with reform. While conservatives in the party preferred to address these crises by resurrecting Maoist ideology, reformers like Deng Xiaoping, who believed such methods to be impracticable, sought to develop a replacement ideology that could fulfill the vital role of political indoctrination necessary to maintain control – namely, nationalism. As Suisheng Zhao points out, “Chinese Communist leaders began to place emphasis on the party’s role as the paramount patriotic force and guardian of national pride in order to find a new basis of legitimacy to bolster faith in a system in trouble and hold the country together during the period of rapid and turbulent transformation.”¹⁴⁷

As a result, the CCP initiated the patriotic education campaign (*aiguozhuyi jiaoyu yundong*) in the early-1990s to regain legitimacy among the country’s youth. Instead of trying to increase education on Marxist ideology (something that Chinese students increasingly resented anyway), the party focused on “the ‘great achievements’ of the Chinese people and especially the Communist Party....By appealing to

¹⁴³ Yuan, “Chinese Perceptions of U.S. Attitudes,” 106.

¹⁴⁴ Zhao, *A Nation-State by Construction*, 8.

¹⁴⁵ In his study of ‘occidentalism’ – China’s construction of the Western Other – Xiaomei Chen makes a similar distinction between official and unofficial discourses of the West. See Xiaomei Chen, *Occidentalism: A Theory of Counter-Discourse in Post-Mao China* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995).

¹⁴⁶ Suisheng Zhao, “A State-Led Nationalism: The Patriotic Education Campaign in Post-Tiananmen China,” *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 31 (September 1998): 288. See also Jie Chen, “The Impact of Reform on the Party and Ideology in China,” *The Journal of Contemporary China* 9 (Summer 1995): 22-34.

¹⁴⁷ Zhao, “A State-Led Nationalism,” 289.

the students' sense of patriotism rather than trying to convert them to Marxism, the Communist regime hoped to reassert the moral authority of the party."¹⁴⁸ It should be noted that the government preferred the term 'patriotism' to 'nationalism'; their desire was to promote loyalty to a CCP-led state, not ethnic division between the majority Han Chinese and China's fifty-five minority nationalities. Yet for the purpose of this study, such a distinction is relatively unimportant.¹⁴⁹ What is important is the fact that for the first time, national patriotism, stated in distinctly unMarxist terms, became the primary subject of official propaganda. A new emphasis was put on Chinese history and traditional culture, including the Confucian values (though not Confucianism per se) that early Chinese nationalists had tried so hard to eliminate.

The active efforts of the CCP to promote Chinese patriotism as the new source of its political legitimacy would seem to give strong support for an instrumentalist interpretation of the 'new Chinese nationalism.' Indeed, Zhao argues that the patriotic education campaign was the real source "behind the seemingly spontaneous rise of Chinese nationalism in the 1990s."¹⁵⁰ For him, the instrumental nature of Chinese nationalism becomes readily apparent when one considers that "it lacks rich content that can give a real sense of commonality. The ideals of nationalism with all of its myths and symbols should have their own domain, well above the arena of contemporary policy programs of a political party."¹⁵¹ Instead, he argues, Chinese nationalism lacks real substance beyond support for the CCP and the state. "There is little to compare with the substance of American nationalism with its mystique about [sic] George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, [the] Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, the Bill of Rights, the Pledge of Allegiance. Similarly, there seems to be no counterpart to the Japanese feelings about the monarchy and the British pride in the parliament."¹⁵²

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 293.

¹⁴⁹ Zhao notes that this is simply "a benign term for nationalism." See Suisheng Zhao, "Chinese Nationalism and Beijing's Taiwan Policy: A China Threat?," *Issues & Studies* 36, no. 1 (January/February 2000): 79.

¹⁵⁰ Zhao, "A State-Led Nationalism," 300.

¹⁵¹ Ibid., 301; see also Lucian W. Pye, "How China's Nationalism Was Shanghaied," in *Chinese Nationalism*, ed. Jonathan Unger (Armonk: M. E. Sharpe, Inc., 1996).

¹⁵² Zhao, "A State-Led Nationalism," 301.

Yet to suggest that contemporary Chinese nationalism lacks substance is not entirely accurate. While Zhao is correct to point out “the void [in] cultural ideals” due to decades of attacks on Chinese tradition,¹⁵³ at least one substantive component of Chinese nationalism has remained largely intact – the sense of victimization that came out of China’s interaction with the West. The same ‘mystique’ that he associates with American respect for the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution may be seen in Chinese pride in ‘standing up’ against Western imperialism and China’s struggle to reclaim some small measure of its past glory. The Chinese national discourse centered on China’s ‘century of humiliation’ is every bit as meaningful and substantive as the American national discourse centered on a revolution to protect individual liberty against tyranny. Without such a discourse, it is difficult to see how the CCPs patriotic propaganda would have any effect on China’s youth. While the party may have found it politically expedient to tap into latent nationalist feelings, such a strategy could only work if such feelings already existed to be exploited. As Liu Xiaobo asserts, “no government-sponsored patriotic campaign...can compare with the latest surge in patriotism in the suddenness with which it occurred and in its intensity and its longevity.”¹⁵⁴ In addition, one has to consider the fact that nationalist discourse in China is not the sole property of the CCP. Zhao himself has more recently acknowledged that “although the emerging intellectual discourse on nationalism overlapped, to a certain extent, the patriotic education rhetoric of the Chinese government, its emergence was largely *independent* of official propaganda.”¹⁵⁵

The independent emergence of a new sense of Chinese nationalism was a public reaction, particularly among intellectuals, to the reorientation of US China policy after Tiananmen Square. Given the fact that this reorientation was sparked by an American desire to stand up for the freedoms of the Chinese people in general, and Chinese students and intellectuals in particular, Zi rightly points out that this may seem paradoxical.¹⁵⁶ Yet US actions toward China were perceived quite differently on the other side of the Pacific. “Americans thought they were striking a blow for the Chinese people against a

¹⁵³ Ibid., 301.

¹⁵⁴ Cited in Suisheng Zhao, *A Nation-State by Construction: Dynamics of Modern Chinese Nationalism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), 9.

¹⁵⁵ Zhao, “Chinese Nationalism and Pragmatic Foreign Policy Behavior,” 68; emphasis added.

¹⁵⁶ Zi, “The Clash of Ideas,” 240.

repressive elite,”¹⁵⁷ and expected them to recognize, and perhaps even embrace, the benevolent intentions of US economic sanctions. Most Chinese, however, saw US actions in a far more cynical light. Lampton points out that “as Washington pushed for sanctions to punish the human rights infractions of the Communist leadership in 1989 and thereafter, it simultaneously pushed for market opening and protection of intellectual property rights, the same combination of commercial pressure and high-minded rhetoric that the Chinese had experienced prior to 1949....For the Chinese, this was but a recurrent pattern – Americans articulate high principles but simultaneously seek to turn Chinese weakness to their commercial advantage.”¹⁵⁸

Many Chinese reacted strongly to what they perceived as unwarranted interference in their domestic affairs. In his study of Sino-American images, Wang points out that “some Chinese respondents, while they might not generally oppose American intervention in international affairs, became very emotional when touching upon the American ‘interference’ in Chinese internal affairs. Even for some Western-educated respondents who generally had good feelings about the United States, this nationalistic mentality was inescapable.”¹⁵⁹ The US attempt to use MFN status as leverage over human rights was an issue of particular concern. Wang cites one diplomat as saying:

To tell you the truth, a large number of Chinese intellectuals I know feel sickened about the way the United States brandishes MFN trade status as a weapon to push China down. China’s \$10 billion trade surplus is nothing in the whole of American trade. If you Americans are sincere in helping China, why do you keep picking on it? The behaviour of the American Congress hurts Chinese feelings badly. To put it bluntly, you Americans are rich and strong, we Chinese are poor and weak. Therefore you feel free to bully us. I have very favourable feelings about some aspects of the United States, but on this issue I am disgusted. You take China as a piece on the chessboard of domestic politics, kicking it here and kicking it there. How do we Chinese feel? Some Americans assert that Sino-US relations are not important any more because of the relaxation of US-Soviet relations. You simply play the China card in politics at home and abroad. We Chinese cannot stand this. Are you Americans advocating fair play? Where is the fair play? The only reason is that China is still poor so that you can kick me around. They are mistaken. We Chinese will not stomach this insult (*yanbuxia zhekouqi*). We are prepared for the worst. China will not disappear. In the future, Chinese people will remember what you Americans did to us when we were in difficulties.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁷ Lampton, *Same Bed, Different Dreams*, 254.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 254.

¹⁵⁹ Wang, *Limited Adversaries*, 170.

¹⁶⁰ Cited in Wang, *Limited Adversaries*, 170.

Of even greater concern to the general public was the Congressional attempt to prevent China from hosting the 2000 Summer Olympics. Hosting the Olympics was seen by many as a symbol of China's increased international status, much as Japan's hosting of the 1964 Olympics and South Korea's hosting of the 1988 Olympics represented their rise in world standing.¹⁶¹ By successfully preventing China from doing so (from the Chinese perspective), the United States entered the crosshairs of the Chinese public. Suettinger argues that, "not inclined to accept American criticism of China's human rights situation in the first place, Chinese citizens tended to share the government's view that the Olympic defeat had been carefully orchestrated to humiliate China."¹⁶² Although he suggests that this incident was played up by the government, Joseph Fewsmith asserts that "this exercise of 'leverage,' more than any single event, convinced students, intellectuals, and ordinary Chinese alike that the United States opposed China, not [just] the Chinese government."¹⁶³

The belief that the United States was opposed to China, not just to the Chinese government, began to crystallize even more due to its intervention during the 1995-96 Taiwan Strait crisis. That intervention helped reinforce the growing sense that the United States sought to contain China and prevent it from attaining its rightful place in the international system as a whole nation-state. The Chinese felt deeply betrayed by the Clinton administration's decision to allow Lee to visit the United States, particularly since the administration had previously promised that no such visit would be allowed. "Ordinary Chinese were quick to believe that the United States was aiding Taiwan's independence aims....Posters such as 'Down with U.S. Imperialism' were found on many university campuses in Beijing and young students made an application to the public security bureau for permission to stage a demonstration at the U.S. embassy in Beijing."¹⁶⁴ When the United States sent two aircraft carriers to the region, China was even more incensed. As Garver describes:

¹⁶¹ Guangqiu Xu, "The Chinese Anti-American Nationalism in the 1990s," *Asian Perspective* 22 (1998): 211.

¹⁶² Suettinger, *Beyond Tiananmen*, 170.

¹⁶³ Joseph Fewsmith, "The Impact of WTO/PNTR on Chinese Politics," *NBR Analysis* 11, no. 2 (July 2000), 2.

¹⁶⁴ Xu, "The Chinese Anti-American Nationalism in the 1990s," 214.

In Beijing some people believed there was no reason for the United States to be uncertain of what China intended to do. Through its limited force deployments to the Strait region, China had signaled that it did not intend to actually attack Taiwan. While fire-breathing propaganda might issue from the CCP's Hong Kong media, China had not deployed the material means to effect an actual invasion....Chinese analysts believed that U.S. leaders should know from intelligence gathered by U.S. satellite reconnaissance that Chinese intentions were limited to influencing Taiwan's leaders psychologically. Distinction between China's propaganda and real capabilities should show that the PLA did not intend to actually attack Taiwan. When, in spite of this knowledge, the United States intervened, a second layer was added to the Chinese feeling of betrayal.¹⁶⁵

While US policymakers saw American actions as a prudent response to prevent the possibility of Chinese aggression against Taiwan, the Chinese saw it as yet another attempt by the United States to thwart its efforts to forestall Taiwan's move towards independence, and thus keep the Chinese nation weak and divided.

Thus, by the mid-1990s, a significant degree of anti-American nationalism became evident in China. One 1995 survey reported that the United States was the most disliked country of 57% of respondents, with 87% believing that the United States was the most unfriendly country to China.¹⁶⁶ The growing public contempt for US interference in China's domestic affairs became particularly evident with the popularity of a number of harshly nationalistic books that were published beginning in 1996.¹⁶⁷ The first, *China Can Say No (Zhongguo keyi shuo bu)*, was a compilation of essays written by five, formerly pro-American, intellectuals who stated in the book's preface that "they were angered by American interference in Chinese domestic politics and by harsh U.S. economic sanctions."¹⁶⁸ Its main theme, as summarized by Fei-ling Wang, was that

a morally corrupted and over-stretched imperialistic US has been plotting against the rising China in a new cold war, with the help of the non-repenting Japanese and some 'disgusting Chinese' including those living in Taiwan who take slavery by the West as something 'noble and happy'. As a result, it is necessary and almost mandatory for China to stand up and say no to the US clearly and loudly. China should adopt a counter-containment strategy and prepare for a long-term resistance against the American 'hegemony' politically, economically, and culturally....By saying no to the US and having a counter-containment strategy, the future will be brighter for a 'socialist China'

¹⁶⁵ Garver, *Face Off*, 104.

¹⁶⁶ Zheng, *Discovering Chinese Nationalism in China*, 100.

¹⁶⁷ An earlier book, *Looking at China Through a Third Eye (Disanzhi yanjing kan Zhongguo)*, included a chapter with a similar nationalistic tone. See Fewsmith, "The Impact of WTO/PNTR on Chinese Politics," 3.

¹⁶⁸ Yuan, "Chinese Perceptions of U.S. Attitudes," 109.

after ‘holding out for only ten to fifteen years’ because then ‘the world situation will have major changes in favor of us, and the world socialist movement definitely will have a new high tide’.¹⁶⁹

This theme appeared to strike a nerve in the Chinese public, particularly among the country’s youth, who Wang suggests were drawn to its promise of a future where “the power of Chinese thoughts, and Chinese managerial ability will deeply affect the world, and become the only force leading the future human ideological trend.”¹⁷⁰ The book quickly sold over 2 million copies.¹⁷¹ The commercial success of the book led to the publication of a sequel in October, entitled *China Still Can Say No* (*Zhongguo haishi neng shuo bu*).

The level of official support for these books has remained a matter of dispute. Wang points out that “significant political and administrative approval and even support from Beijing has been widely rumored.”¹⁷² According to Suettinger, “one member of the government’s Human Rights Commission provided an epilogue for the book, and Xinhua [the official government news agency] publicized favorable reviews [of the book].”¹⁷³ On the other hand, Zheng notes that the book also received official criticism “because it had a negative impact on China’s foreign image.”¹⁷⁴ In his review of *China Can Say No* and other similar books, Hongshan Li suggests that “although the basic views of the books were very close to the official policy toward the US,...[American observers] jumped to the conclusion that the books were anti-American and suspected that the authors were manipulated by the Chinese government.”¹⁷⁵ The point he makes about not assuming that such criticisms must be government-sanctioned is a good one. “Being used to hearing a single voice from the Chinese government in the last half century, some Americans could not accept the fact that many Chinese intellectuals would join the

¹⁶⁹ Fei-ling Wang, “Ignorance, Arrogance, and Radical Nationalism: A Review of *China Can Say No*,” *Journal of Contemporary China* 6 (1997): 163.

¹⁷⁰ Cited in Wang, “Ignorance, Arrogance, and Radical Nationalism,” 163.

¹⁷¹ Suettinger, *Beyond Tiananmen*, 286.

¹⁷² Wang, “Ignorance, Arrogance, and Radical Nationalism,” 161.

¹⁷³ Suettinger, *Beyond Tiananmen*, 285.

¹⁷⁴ Zheng, *Discovering Chinese Nationalism in China*, 110.

¹⁷⁵ Hongshan Li, “China Talks Back: Anti-Americanism or Nationalism? A Review of Recent ‘Anti-American’ Books in China,” *Journal of Contemporary China* 6 (1997): 156. Li’s argument that such books do not represent expressions of anti-Americanism is based on a broad definition of anti-Americanism “as a hostile attitude toward anything American including its people, culture, and political and economic systems.” (Ibid.) While hostility toward certain aspects of American culture may be open to debate, the author prefers a more narrow use of the term.

Communist government in attacking the US policy toward China.”¹⁷⁶ Yet just as the Congress and the media in the United States may articulate attitudes toward China independent of official White House policy, Li argues that “the criticism from the Chinese public would add the second voice, which had long been absent, in China’s dealing with the US.”¹⁷⁷ Thus, despite its general support for the government,¹⁷⁸ such expressions of Chinese nationalism should be seen as authentic, not government-manufactured.¹⁷⁹

However, in many ways, *China Can Say No* and similar books that followed were a response not just to anger at US interference in China’s domestic affairs, but to the perception that the United States now saw China as an actual threat that needed to be contained. The publication in the United States of Fukuyama’s *The End of History and the Last Man*, Samuel Huntington’s “The Clash of Civilizations?,”¹⁸⁰ and Bernstein and Munro’s *The Coming Conflict with China* sparked enormous concern that China would enter the crosshairs of the United States as its next major competitor. “While some Chinese, liberal intellectuals, welcomed Fukuyama’s argument in terms of the victory of liberalism, they were concerned that Western, liberal democracies would confront China’s rising based on geopolitical considerations. Their concern was confirmed by Huntington’s argument that geopolitical struggles in the post-Cold War world were not ideologically motivated but defined by different civilizations,”¹⁸¹ and reconfirmed by the growing discussion of a ‘China Threat’ in books like Bernstein and Munro’s. Huntington’s essay, in particular, had an enormous impact on the attitudes of Chinese intellectuals.¹⁸²

To many Chinese, such arguments were not mere academic theories. They seemed to provide the intellectual background for changes in American policy during the first years of the Clinton administration. In particular, Anthony Lake’s comments in 1993 on ‘backlash states,’ which came on the heels of the publication of Huntington’s provocative essay, helped to solidify the perception that US

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., 156.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., 159.

¹⁷⁸ It should be pointed out that the book also criticized government policy for not being strong enough in standing up to American bullying.

¹⁷⁹ It should also be noted that contrary opinions have been published in China arguing that overly nationalistic attitudes could hurt China’s development. See Zheng, *Discovering Chinese Nationalism in China*, 148, 150.

¹⁸⁰ Samuel Huntington, “The Clash of Civilizations?,” *Foreign Affairs* 72, no. 3 (Summer 1993): 22-49.

¹⁸¹ Suisheng Zhao, “Chinese Nationalism and Pragmatic Foreign Policy Behavior,” in *Chinese Foreign Policy: Pragmatism and Strategic Behavior*, ed. Suisheng Zhao (Armonk: M. E. Sharpe, 2004), 68.

¹⁸² Zheng, *Discovering Chinese Nationalism in China*, 76-80.

policy-makers took such ideas seriously. As Suettinger points out, “Lake’s address seemed to put the otherwise unconnected U.S. actions over the summer [continued fights over MFN, proliferation, and the *Yin He* incident] into an understandable context and probably began tipping the balance of the debate in China about what U.S. strategic intentions toward China really were....China’s think tanks and strategic writers began talking more openly and frequently about America pursuing a policy of ‘containment’ toward China.”¹⁸³ American publications and policy statements seemed to represent the opening salvos of a second Cold War aimed at China, one justified by the belief that the rise of China presented a concrete threat to American interests and regional security. The China Threat argument was seen by most Chinese as inherently unjust. In May 1997, then Vice Premier Zhu Rongji criticized it by stating:

I’ve seen the book ‘The Coming Conflict with China’ and Samuel Huntington’s ‘The Clash of Civilizations.’ It’s ridiculous. For more than 150 years, China has been subjected to foreign aggression and we have suffered egregiously. China’s still got a long way to go to become a developed country. Even when China becomes strong and developed, China will never get involved in aggression against other countries or interfere in other countries’ internal affairs.¹⁸⁴

Zi summarizes Chinese sentiments well, suggesting that “while the Chinese feel that they have barely stretched their back after a hundred years of bending, the Americans are already talking about constraining China to prevent it from growing too tall.”¹⁸⁵

Such fears of a US policy of containment provided the lens through which the accidental bombing on May 7, 1999 of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade, Yugoslavia was perceived. To most Chinese, the bombing, which resulted in the death of three Chinese journalists, was no accident.¹⁸⁶ John Wong and Zheng Yongnian note the irony that almost a decade after Tiananmen Square, Chinese students were once again taking to the streets in protest, not for democracy, but against the United States.¹⁸⁷ Much

¹⁸³ Suettinger, *Beyond Tiananmen*, 179-80.

¹⁸⁴ Cited in Lampton, *Same Bed, Different Dreams*, 249.

¹⁸⁵ Zi, “The Clash of Ideas,” 240.

¹⁸⁶ See Peter Hays Gries, “Tears of Rage: Chinese Nationalist Reactions to the Belgrade Embassy Bombing,” *The China Journal* 46 (July 2001): 25-43; and Dingxin Zhao, “An Angle on Nationalism in China Today: Attitudes Among Beijing Students after Belgrade 1999,” *The China Quarterly* 172 (December 2002): 885-905.

¹⁸⁷ John Wong and Zheng Yongnian, “Nationalism and Its Dilemma: Chinese Responses to Embassy Bombing,” in *Reform, Legitimacy and Dilemmas: China’s Politics and Society*, eds. Wang Gungwu and Zheng Yongnian (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 2000), 322.

like Tiananmen Square did for the United States, “the May 1999 U.S. bombing of the Chinese Embassy in Belgrade created powerful visual images that were constantly replayed and reprinted in the PRC media; this information was made available to the Chinese people through the expanding infrastructure of global communication...Those images included pictures of the smoking hulk of the bombed-out embassy, grieving relatives of the dead, the return of the victims’ bodies to their homeland, and their bodies lying on autopsy tables.”¹⁸⁸ The embassy bombing was Tiananmen in reverse – a set of powerful visual images that shattered once and for all the idea of the United States as a benevolent world power, and reinforced the new image of the United States as a threat to China’s place in the world. As Lampton puts it, “if powerful visual images of Tiananmen ended Americans’ honeymoon with China in 1989, powerful visual images of Belgrade ended what was left of that honeymoon for the Chinese people a decade later.”¹⁸⁹ If US intervention in the Taiwan Strait had not convinced them of US intentions, then its bombing of the Chinese embassy certainly did.

A clear picture begins to develop out of this discussion. In the wake of Tiananmen Square, the United States sought to secure its identity as a champion of democracy and human rights by recasting China as a failed modernizer, a role that conflicted with China’s own role as a victimized great power. This role conflict represented a threat, not just to China’s material security, but to its ideational security. China, in turn, sought to defend its identity by recasting the United States as a hegemonic power out to contain China and prevent it from attaining its rightful position on the world stage. The result was the rise of a ‘new’ Chinese nationalism in the 1990s that was largely anti-American in character. Just as Gries suggests that “American ideologues have long deployed the foil of Chinese tyranny to argue the virtues of American liberty,”¹⁹⁰ the United States became the main foil against which Chinese nationalism was reinvigorated. Indeed, it could be argued that contemporary Chinese nationalism is almost

¹⁸⁸ Lampton, *Same Bed, Different Dreams*, 266-67.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 267.

¹⁹⁰ Gries, *China’s New Nationalism*, 33.

synonymous with anti-Americanism.¹⁹¹ Thus, this nationalism can be understood as a reaction to the ideational threat posed by the United States. The deterioration of Sino-US relations during the 1990s can thus be seen as the result of an ideational security dilemma, in which the actions taken by each party to guarantee its own security left the other insecure.

Of course, it should be noted that the argument that contemporary Chinese nationalism is a reaction to the United States is not meant to suggest that developments in Chinese domestic politics did not contribute to its construction, nor even that it was uncontested. Indeed, a counterargument to *China Can Say No* was published two years later, entitled *China Should Not be 'Mr. No'* (*Zhongguo bu dang 'bu xiansheng'*), and received positive reviews from the CCP-run *People's Daily*. James Miles notes that “this book was symptomatic of divided opinion among officials and the public about the hot-headed anti-US sentiment expressed in *The China Can Say No*.”¹⁹² As suggested earlier in this chapter, domestic political actors play an important role in processes of social construction and should not be completely left out of the analysis. However, as with the US counter-role of China as a failed modernizer, just because Chinese nationalism is politically contested does not mean that it is any less real, or that it can be understood simply by examining the dynamics of Chinese domestic politics. The reactive model utilized here is meant to provide a more complete picture of nationalism and its effects, one that focuses on the international dynamics that produce it without ignoring domestic political realities. The question that remains to be answered is whether or not such reactive nationalism makes China more prone to conflict with the United States, and what this reveals about nationalist conflict more generally. In other words, what can the reactive model of nationalism illustrated here tell us about the propensity of states to use force in pursuit of nationalist goals? This final question will be addressed in the conclusions.

¹⁹¹ Of course, it should be noted that Japan has often gotten equal scorn from Chinese nationalists. However, given the relative importance of Sino-US relations, the part that Japan plays in the construction of Chinese nationalism can be left for another time.

¹⁹² James Miles, “Chinese Nationalism, US Policy and Asian Security,” *Survival* 42, no. 4 (Winter 2000-01): 54.

Chapter 8. CONCLUSIONS: ASSESSING THE PROSPECTS FOR NATIONALIST CONFLICT

This dissertation has sought to address an important question in international politics – how does nationalism influence the behavior of states, and more specifically, does nationalism make states more likely to become involved in interstate conflict? This is an important question to answer, since nationalism has often been assumed to be a source of such conflict. Yet scholars of international politics have largely failed to explore this issue, leaving it under-theorized and making it difficult to assess whether or not such assumptions have any basis in reality. This is compounded by the fact that traditional debates regarding the nature of nationalism between primordialists, who see nations as real communities bound by long-standing social ties, and instrumentalists, who see them as manufactured comparatively recently by elites in pursuit of their own political interests within the confines of the modern state, have largely ignored the role of international politics. Even the entry of ‘constructivists’ into the debate has failed to lead to a comprehensive search for answers to the riddle of nationalism beyond the boundaries of the state. This represents a serious omission, since – recalling the comments of James Mayall cited in the introduction – without a third image approach to nationalism, it will never be clear to what extent nationalism is produced or constrained by the international system, let alone the effects it may have on state behavior.

The author has attempted to address this problem by developing a reactive model of nationalism and nationalist conflict that is explicitly grounded in IR theory, thereby bridging the conceptual gap between two areas of scholarly inquiry – IR and nationalism – that have remained isolated from each other for far too long. Specifically, the author has sought to use the constructivist approach in IR theory – or, more accurately, a realist-constructivist approach – to understand how nationalism is constituted by the social structure of the international system at both a macro- and micro-level, how it is expressed

macro-structurally as a type of state (the nation-state) with specifically ‘national’ interests that set the parameters of state action, and how it is expressed micro-structurally as a reaction to ideational threats. By utilizing this model to analyze the origins of Chinese nationalism and its influence on two important (and closely related) issues in Chinese foreign policy – reunification with Taiwan and Sino-US relations – it was hoped that some conclusions could be drawn regarding the conflict propensity of Chinese nationalism (assumed by many to be very high), and of nationalist states in general. Although the conclusions made here are not meant to offer a final, definitive answer to the question of nationalist conflict, they do help to bring some clarity to an important issue and, perhaps more importantly, lay the groundwork for further study.

As noted in Chapter 4, the application of the theoretical model developed here requires answering three essential questions. First, is nationalism constituted by the international system? This is vital to determining the validity of the approach; if nationalism is not constituted by the international system, then the reactive model outlined by the author will yield few answers to the central question of nationalism and state behavior. Second, if nationalism is constituted by the international system, how does ‘national’ identity differ from other types of state identity in terms of the interests associated with it, and what impact do these ‘national’ interests have on state behavior? Analysis of the macro-structural dimension of nationalism (i.e., nationalism as type identity) will make it possible to establish the basic parameters of a state’s foreign policy – what it wants and why. Finally, to what extent does nationalism manifest itself as a reaction to ideational threats, and how might this set the stage for interstate conflict? Analysis of the micro-structural dimension of nationalism (i.e., nationalism as role identity) will provide a glimpse of how prone such an ideational security dilemma may be to escalation. The analysis of Chinese nationalism has provided some important answers to these questions.

First, the examination of the origins and development of Chinese nationalism conducted in Chapter 5 demonstrates that, at least in the China case, nationalism is indeed constituted by the international system. Prior to its contact with the West, China was at the center of a Confucian system of international relations that was based on fundamentally different norms from those of the European states

system on which the modern international system is based. Such norms did not involve the recognition of sovereign states (much less the idea of nation-states) and established political legitimacy on the acceptance of Confucian practices. For China's neighbors, this acceptance meant the sending of tribute missions intended to demonstrate recognition of the superiority of Chinese civilization. China might thus be best characterized as a cultural-state that saw itself as coterminous with civilization, not a nation-state limited by legal boundaries or ethnic differences. Despite the rise and fall of Chinese dynasties, and the occasional conquest of China by stronger neighbors, the basic character of this system remained essentially the same for centuries.

It was the arrival of the Western powers that eventually forced a fundamental change in China's identity, and consequently in its relations with the rest of the world. The Confucian system that China had developed was incompatible with the Western system of sovereign states, and the West's technological and military superiority gave them a distinct edge that forced China to adapt. This adaptation was slow and painful. It took decades of failed reform efforts, and the eventual importation of Western ideas, for China to learn how to operate in a much changed world. Critically, this involved more than just changes in China's policies, but changes in its identity and the interests associated with it. China had to discard its conception of itself as a universal empire and learn how to be a modern state, and a nation. Although domestic political debates certainly had an important impact on the specific dynamics of China's adaptation to the West, it was system-level forces that led to Chinese acceptance of the national idea, making China a perfect example of Rodney Hall's second sequence of transformational logic linking system change and identity change. While this is not a surprising conclusion for China scholars who have long recognized the role that the West played in the development of Chinese nationalism, it does lend critical validity to the author's decision to use constructivism to analyze nationalism's impact on state behavior and offers an important lesson for scholars of nationalism that international politics cannot be ignored when discussing its nature and origins. It also helps to connect this oft-told story to broader currents in international politics.

Since Chinese nationalism was indeed constituted by the international system, this leads us to the second question – how have changes in China’s type identity, from cultural-state to nation-state, affected the definition of its interests regarding Taiwan, and what does this change in interests tell us about the conflict propensity of Chinese nationalism? This actually involves three sub-questions. First, have Chinese interests regarding Taiwan changed over time? If its transition from cultural-state to nation-state has not influenced China’s interests, then further analysis would be unnecessary. Yet as the discussion in Chapter 6 clearly demonstrates, China’s interest in Taiwan has indeed changed dramatically, from being ‘beyond the pale’ of Chinese civilization to being integral to China’s territorial and national integrity. Despite its proximity to the Chinese mainland, there was little official interest in the island for centuries, either in terms of trade, territorial aggrandizement, or incorporation into the tribute system. Its relatively low level of political development made Taiwan inconsequential in the eyes of Confucian scholar-bureaucrats, regardless of any potential value it may have had for trade and security. It was not until the 17th century that China grudgingly began to pay attention to the island. Even then, the determination that Taiwan was important to China was the result of a slow learning process as it responded to increasing threats from the Western powers. Taiwan did not receive its current status as a vital interest until well into the 20th century.

Given the fact that Chinese interests regarding Taiwan have indeed changed over time, the next question is – why did this change occur? Two explanations present themselves. One is that China simply adapted to changes in its strategic environment by reevaluating the importance of Taiwan to its security. The other is that changes in the social structure of the system in which China was embedded forced it to redefine its identity, and therefore its interests. The former involves simple learning that only affects the way in which China pursues its exogenously-defined interests – i.e., how does China achieve its interests better given changing circumstances? The latter involves complex learning that affects the way in which China defines its identity and its interests – i.e., how does a change in identity alter what China wants in the first place? On the surface, China’s changing concern for Taiwan could certainly be seen as simply a response to changes in its strategic environment. The initial incorporation of Taiwan into the Chinese

empire in 1684 was prompted by practical security considerations, as was the final acceptance of full administrative responsibility for the eastern half of the island in 1887. New challenges thus forced China to reconsider how to effectively guarantee its own security. Without them, Taiwan might have remained on the periphery.

However, while this explanation is not incorrect, it fails to tell the whole story. What it does not fully account for is the slowness of the Chinese response, the degree of political resistance involved, or the lack of communication and understanding between the various parties. While serious debate over a proper course of action might be expected for any state struggling with new challenges to its security, China's attempt to fit its response within the traditional pattern of Confucian norms, even after it should have become clear that those norms were failing in the face of Western pressure, makes any argument that China was simply seeking better ways to pursue its established interests highly suspect. Even if one takes into account the fact that conservative elites had little desire to weaken their own political positions, the pattern of China's response and the difficulty it had communicating its position to other actors would seem to make more sense if we treat its identity and interests as in flux. Furthermore, the fact that these changes in China's interests regarding Taiwan occurred at the same time that China was attempting to recast itself as a modern nation-state cannot be just a coincidence. Thus, while security concerns may have provided the impetus for change, those changes should not be narrowly construed as China's search for better ways to pursue the same interests.

Finally, what does this suggest about the conflict propensity of Chinese nationalism? Nationalism, expressed macro-structurally as a type identity, sets the basic parameters of state behavior by helping to define its interests. In the case of China, its transition from cultural-state to nation-state led it to redefine its relationship to territory so as to make the issue of territorial integrity a vital interest. At the same time, the development of Chinese nationalism led it to interpret its territorial losses as a legacy of national humiliation, making territorial integrity not just a matter of state security, but of national pride. This macro-structural change in China's identity helps to explain the importance of Taiwan to Chinese national interests and its willingness to use force in pursuit of that interest – it is the last major piece of

territory that remains to be reclaimed, one that is particularly symbolic of China's suffering at the hands of foreign powers. Although economic and security interests must certainly be factored in, it is the historical legacy it represents that gives the Taiwan issue its substance.

However, while the macro-structural change in China's identity helps to explain why Taiwan is a vital Chinese interest, it tells us relatively little about how China is likely to pursue that interest. It is clear that China's past actions toward Taiwan have been quite varied, oscillating between bellicosity and conciliation. Indeed, at the same time that nationalism has seemed to be on the rise in China, China appears to have taken a decidedly more moderate approach to the problem of Taiwan. As such, one can conclude that the parameters established by a state's type identity are relatively broad, allowing for a great deal of variation depending on specific circumstances. This makes sense, given the fact that there may be numerous ways for a state to achieve any particular goal. Thus, while Chinese nationalism and the 'national' interests associated with it may create the *potential* for conflict over Taiwan, it does not necessarily make such a conflict more likely. The macro-structural dimension of nationalism determines what a state is willing to fight for, not under what circumstances it will do so.

This brings us to the third and final question that this dissertation has sought to address – namely, given the parameters set by China's identity as a nation-state, how do the dynamics of nationalist role formation influence Chinese foreign policy? Again, this actually involves a number of sub-questions. First, does a role conflict exist between the United States and China? The discussion of post-Tiananmen Sino-US relations in Chapter 7 makes clear that such a role conflict does in fact exist. The Chinese crackdown on pro-democracy demonstrators in 1989 caused the United States to redefine the counter-role it sought to project onto China – from the 'liberal China myth' to the image of China as a failed modernizer. US policy toward China followed suit, with attempts to put various economic and political sanctions on China, as well as a growing concern that China would become a threat to US interests in the Asia-Pacific. This counter-role conflicted with the great power role that China sought to enact, and arguably did so at a particularly sensitive time. Just as China seemed to be reaping the rewards of reform, its status was called into question by the United States which saw China less as a great power to be

respected than as a potentially dangerous rogue to be contained. In essence, it was this incompatibility in the roles that each sought to pursue in their relations with each other that helps to explain the deterioration of Sino-US relations in the 1990s.

Of course, one could argue that a role conflict is not necessary to explain such a deterioration. Even if one discards the suggestion that it was all but inevitable due to the systemic changes that came with the end of the Cold War, one could legitimately question whether the issue of conflicting roles would offer any greater explanatory power than simply considering the concrete actions taken by the United States that may have conflicted with Chinese interests. After all, one would not have to analyze roles and counter-roles to recognize the potential for US economic and political sanctions to produce a negative reaction from China. While this is no doubt true, it does not tell the whole story. Looking at US actions, even in the aggregate, without considering their broader context risks obscuring the underlying substance of those actions, and the true nature of the Chinese response. China was reacting to more than just threats to its material interests; it was reacting to threats to its place in the world – the role it sought to play as a newly prosperous nation-state – and defined the nature of US threats in those terms.

Given that a Sino-US role conflict did exist, was the rise of China's 'new nationalism' a result of it or something else? The discussion of China's 'new nationalism' makes it clear that the deterioration of Sino-US relations was a major factor in the renewal of Chinese nationalism in the 1990s. Although the CCPs decision to rebuild the party's legitimacy in the aftermath of Tiananmen Square by launching the patriotic education campaign cannot be discounted as an important factor in the rise of nationalism, it is difficult to see how such a campaign could have been successful if it had not been able to tap into latent feelings of nationalism in the public and had not been corroborated by US actions. Party officials may have taken advantage of the situation, but it was US policy – economic sanctions to force American standards of human rights, attempts to prevent China from hosting the Olympics, treating China as a dangerous threat to regional security, continued support for Taiwan – that turned much of the Chinese public against the United States. Thus, while one cannot ignore the dynamics of domestic politics,

Chinese nationalism must be properly seen as a reaction to US threats, not so much to China's physical security, but to its identity.

Finally, if Chinese nationalism is a reaction to US threats to China's identity, could it lead to an escalation in Sino-US tensions, and possibly even to a Sino-US conflict? On the surface, this certainly seems possible. At a minimum, the development of Chinese nationalism as a reaction to US pressures might indicate a higher likelihood of a Sino-US conflict in the sense that it highlights an incompatibility of interests.¹ The existence of a role conflict may increase the likelihood of misunderstanding the other's intentions, thereby making it more difficult for either to see past their differences. This could be reinforced as nationalist sentiments make China more sensitive to perceived slights. It is even possible that this could grow into a long-term rivalry, possibly even into a new Cold War. Indeed, it might be suggested that the deterioration of Sino-US relations in the 1990s provides evidence of this. William Overholt has argued that

the emergence of the Second Cold War is increasingly difficult to reverse because it is emerging not just in national policies but also in the hearts of the American and Chinese peoples. Citizens of the United States increasingly see China as dangerous, aggressive, and militaristic. Citizens of China see the United States as determined to use any means necessary to suppress China's revival. In both cases, these perceptions are close to the opposite of the truth. But the perceptions go very deep.²

The deterioration of Sino-US relations might thus be characterized as an ideational security dilemma – the result of each side seeking to safeguard its own identity, and causing a reaction that further threatens it – that has produced a downward spiral of increasingly sour, if not necessarily hostile, relations.

The rise of a new Cold War between the United States and China would certainly make China more prone to conflict with the United States than if their relationship was characterized by mutual respect and trust. Yet conflicts of interest, misunderstanding, mistrust, and even long-term rivalry do not mean that China will necessarily become more aggressive or likely to initiate a military conflict. Indeed,

¹ Charles Gochman has defined interstate conflict as “when decision makers of states perceive and pronounce that their interests or the interests of their states are incompatible with those of other states.” See Charles S. Gochman, “The Evolution of Disputes,” in *The Process of War: Advancing the Scientific Study of War*, eds. Stuart A. Bremer and Thomas R. Cusack (Amsterdam: Gordon and Breach Publishers, 1995), 64.

² Cited in Yongnian Zheng, *Discovering Chinese Nationalism in China: Modernization, Identity, and International Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 4.

as the Taiwan Strait crisis demonstrates, even within the context of heightened nationalist feelings and a potential challenge to China's national interests, China's behavior has remained relatively restrained. Of course, one could argue that this is largely due to the willingness of the United States to confront Chinese provocations and force China to blink in the face of superior capabilities. Yet even if this were true, it would tend to discredit the view that nationalism drives states to mindless aggression in pursuit of their 'national' interests. The fact that China can subordinate nationalist feelings to broader interests, such as maintaining a stable security environment by avoiding conflict with the United States in order to focus on modernization, indicates that Chinese nationalism is not as destabilizing as many have feared. A Sino-US conflict cannot be entirely ruled out in the future, particularly in the event of a significant shift in the balance of power, or if China were backed into a corner by a formal declaration of Taiwanese independence. However, while Chinese nationalism might be seen as setting the stage for such a conflict by contributing to the breakdown of Sino-US relations, it would not necessarily be a direct cause of such a conflict.

Furthermore, the fact that Chinese nationalism is largely a reaction to the United States means that it is likely to be highly variable depending on US policy. Another shift in American attitudes towards China could result in a reduction in outward expressions of Chinese nationalism (at least directed at the United States). This might arguably have already begun. Kurt Campbell has suggested that "the horror of September 11 and the establishment of a new enemy...that posed a greater 'clear and present' danger to the American homeland cast China in a new light for many Americans. Instead of being the biggest threat of the United States, China overnight became an indispensable partner in the U.S.-led war on terrorism."³ Although he recognizes that this is likely to be only a temporary change in US priorities, Campbell also correctly notes that it "presents an important window of opportunity"⁴ for both sides to alleviate the tensions that built up in their relationship after Tiananmen Square. Even prior to 9/11, Jianwei Wang noted that the complex nature of their mutual images offered a limited window for Sino-

³ Kurt Campbell, "Images and U.S. Strategic Thinking on China," in *China in the American Political Imagination*, ed. Carola McGiffert (Washington: The CSIS Press, 2003), 3-4.

⁴ Ibid., 4.

American cooperation, suggesting that “American moral objections to the Chinese regime probably will not eliminate China as a possible partner in international affairs, and Chinese nationalist resentment of American ‘hegemonism’ may still allow the Chinese to absorb American political and cultural values on their own terms.”⁵ Thus, the reactive nature of Chinese nationalism indicates that China’s propensity for nationalist conflict is highly dependent on the state of its relationship with the United States. As Yuan Peng suggests, “if the United States treats China as a partner, China will reciprocate and Chinese people will embrace America. If the United States treats China as a threat, Chinese perceptions of the United States will turn sharply negative.”⁶

What then does the China case suggest about the impact of nationalism on state behavior in general? First, in those cases where international politics plays a significant role in the constitution of national identity, it is likely that nationalism’s influence on a state’s behavior will be heavily dependent on the social relationship that exists between the state in question and any significant Other(s) with which it interacts. Whether this would apply to all, or even most, states must remain an open question. The importance of domestic politics in the social construction of national identity cannot be discounted in any case, and in some cases might be far more important than international politics. However, given the fact that the national idea has become an integral part of the international system’s social structure, it seems equally unlikely that international politics could be completely ignored, even in those cases where nationalism seems to be largely the product of domestic politics. Further study will be necessary to begin mapping out the relative importance of international and domestic factors in the construction of nationalism more fully. However, the China case highlights the importance of taking international politics seriously in any analysis of nationalism.

This has important implications for our understanding of nationalism and nationalist conflict. If all nationalism is constituted to one degree or another by international forces, then we can consider

⁵ Jianwei Wang, *Limited Adversaries: Post-Cold War Sino-American Mutual Images* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 203.

⁶ Yuan Peng, “Chinese Perceptions of U.S. Attitudes,” in *China in the American Political Imagination*, ed. Carola McGiffert (Washington: The CSIS Press, 2003), 111.

nationalism to be inherently reactionary. It may exist below the surface in any state that has adopted that form of state identity (i.e., banal nationalism), but the visible manifestations of nationalism will likely be the result of outside pressures.⁷ This helps to explain why nationalism is so often associated with conflict; it can be easily ignored, or even believed to not exist, until it is brought to the surface by increasing tensions. However, it would also indicate that, as a cause of interstate conflict, the factor of nationalism is largely indirect. Nationalism may help to define the interests that a state is willing to use force to defend, and thus may set the stage for conflict by outlining the potential for a serious conflict of interests. But it does not determine what actions will be used to defend those interests; this is likely to be highly dependent on circumstances. Nationalism may also help to reinforce poor relations between states by fueling a conflict spiral as each state seeks to defend its own identity at the expense of the other. But it is not the *cause* of poor relations; it is rather the *effect* of a role conflict. Thus, it might be suggested that nationalism is not so much a cause of conflict as a product of it. It could certainly add fuel to the fire by pushing a state to take actions that would cause another state to respond in kind, but nationalism does not necessarily cause interstate conflict as is so often assumed.

The conclusion that nationalism does not necessarily cause interstate conflict, and indeed that nationalism is largely a reaction to ideational threats, is a critical one. Not only does it require us to rethink our understanding of nationalist conflict from a scholarly point of view, it also forces us to consider the possible repercussions that the failure to properly understand the international dimension of nationalism may have on international politics itself. Yongnian Zheng argues that “mis-perceptions about China’s nationalism and its impact on international politics have only resulted in strong nationalist reaction in China....Indeed, the mis-perception of Chinese nationalism in the West is likely to become a major force that pushes China’s nationalism towards more aggression.”⁸ In other words, the failure of scholars and policy-makers alike to understand the reactionary nature of nationalism may have

⁷ One could broaden this to include ethnic conflict within states by relaxing the criterion for ‘outside.’

⁸ Zheng, *Discovering Chinese Nationalism in China*, 9

contributed to the very nationalism that so many China watchers have warned about. If nothing else, this highlights the critical importance of making nationalism a major subject of study in IR theory.

In addition to these conclusions about nationalism and nationalist conflict, another important conclusion can be made from this study. The question of whether material power or social norms and identity are more important in explaining state behavior has driven the debate between realists and constructivists for well over a decade. Yet this study has demonstrated what a number of scholars have begun to realize – neither power nor identity alone can adequately address many of the important issues in international relations. Realism does not fully explain the dramatic changes that China experienced during the latter half of the 19th century as it sought to come to terms with the West. The constructivist focus on social norms and identity provides a better explanation of events, and thus allows the Chinese experience to be more fully integrated into the study of IR. At the same time, however, the constructivist perspective fails to address a key point – the changes in China’s identity were forced on it by the superior material capabilities of the West. Understanding China’s absorption into the international system requires us to set aside the tendency to treat realism and constructivism as entirely incompatible approaches, and instead develop a more synthetic approach that combines realist concerns for power and constructivist concerns for identity. Thus, while the main point of this dissertation was to address the problem of nationalist conflict, an important secondary conclusion is the need to treat realist-constructivism as a valuable addition to IR theory.

Finally, it should be noted once again that while this study represents an important step toward a better understanding of nationalism and nationalist conflict, it is not intended to offer definitive answers to the question of whether nationalism makes states more prone to engage in interstate conflict. Further study will be necessary to flesh out the propositions made by the author. The case of China examined here is but one case; other cases may provide critical support to the concept of reactive nationalism, or could identify critical flaws. While such cases will be left for future study, it would be useful to identify some of the possible directions that such studies could take. Of course, one direction would be to apply the same reactive model of nationalism to other states in order to determine the extent to which

nationalism in those states is a reaction to outside forces, and how it influences their behaviors. However, another important contribution could be made by developing the China case in greater detail, particularly by examining multiple international sources of Chinese nationalism. While the United States has certainly been a primary object of China's reactionary nationalism, Japan has also prompted nationalist reactions. Indeed, one could look at cross-strait relations between China and Taiwan as a separate role conflict. Each of these relationships would be important to examine individually, but it would also be important to examine how multiple interactions affect nationalism and state behavior. Regardless of what direction future research on this topic takes, the reactive model of nationalism developed here represents an important first step in bridging the gap between nationalism and international relations.

APPENDIX A

Ye Jianying's "Nine Principles"

1. In order to bring an end to the unfortunate separation of the Chinese nation as early as possible, we propose that talks be held between the Communist Party of China and the Kuomintang of China on a reciprocal basis so that the two parties will co-operate for the third time to accomplish the great cause of national reunification. The two sides may first send people to meet for an exhaustive exchange of views.
2. It is the urgent desire of the people of all nationalities on both sides of the straits to communicate with each other, reunite with their families and relatives, develop trade and increase mutual understanding. We propose that the two sides make arrangements to facilitate the exchange of mails, trade, air and shipping services, family reunions and visits by relatives and tourists as well as academic, cultural and sports exchanges, and reach an agreement thereupon.
3. After the country is reunified, Taiwan can enjoy a high degree of autonomy as a special administrative region and it can retain its armed forces. The Central Government will not interfere with local affairs on Taiwan.
4. Taiwan's current socio-economic system will remain unchanged, so will its way of life and its economic and cultural relations with foreign countries. There will be no encroachment on the proprietary rights and lawful right of inheritance over private property, houses, land and enterprises, or on foreign investments.
5. People in authority and representative personages of various circles in Taiwan may take up posts of leadership in national political bodies and participate in running the state.
6. When Taiwan's local finance is in difficulty, the Central Government may subsidize it for the circumstances.
7. For people of all nationalities and public figures of various circles in Taiwan who wish to come and settle on the mainland, it is guaranteed that proper arrangements will be made for them, that there will be no discrimination against them, and that they will have the freedom of entry and exit.
8. Industrialists and businessmen in Taiwan are welcome to invest and engage in various economic undertakings on the mainland, and their legal rights, interests and profits are guaranteed.
9. The reunification of the motherland is the responsibility of all Chinese. We sincerely welcome people of all nationalities, public figures of all circles and all mass organizations in Taiwan to

make proposals and suggestions regarding affairs of state through various channels and in various ways.⁹

⁹ Ye Jianying, "Chairman Ye Jianying's Elaborations on Policy Concerning Return of Taiwan to Motherland and Peaceful Reunification," *Beijing Review*, 5 October 1981, 10-11.

APPENDIX B

Jiang Zemin's "Eight Points"

1. Adhering to the principle of one China is the basis and prerequisite for peaceful reunification. China's sovereignty and territorial integrity must never be allowed to suffer division. We must resolutely oppose any statement and action for creating 'the independence of Taiwan'; and we must also resolutely oppose the propositions to 'split the country and rule under separate regimes,' 'two Chinas over a certain period of time,' etc., which are contrary to the principle of one China.
2. We do not have objections to the development of nongovernmental economic and cultural ties between Taiwan and other countries. According to the principle of one China and the characters of international organizations concerned, Taiwan has joined the Asian Development Bank, the Asian-Pacific Economic Cooperation Forum and other international economical organizations in the name of 'Chinese Taipei.' However, we oppose Taiwan's activities in 'expanding its living space internationally,' aimed at creating 'two Chinas' or 'one China, one Taiwan.' All patriotic compatriots in Taiwan and other people of insight understand that instead of solving problems, such activities can only help the forces working for the 'independence of Taiwan,' and undermine the progress of peaceful reunification. Only after peaceful reunification is accomplished can our Taiwan compatriots and other Chinese truly and fully share the international dignity and honor attained by our great motherland.
3. It has been our consistent stand to hold negotiations with Taiwan authorities on the peaceful unification of the motherland. Representatives of all political parties and groups from both sides of the Taiwan Straits can be invited to participate in the negotiations for peaceful reunification....I suggest that, as a first step, negotiations should be held and an agreement reached on officially ending the state of hostility between the two sides under the principle that there is only one China. On this basis, the two sides may bear responsibilities together, maintain China's sovereignty and territorial integrity, as well as plan the future development of the relations between the two sides separated by the strait. As regards the name, place and form of these political talks, a solution acceptable to both sides can certainly be found so long as consultations on an equal footing can be held at an early date.
4. We shall try our best to achieve the peaceful reunification of China since Chinese should not fight Chinese. We do not promise not to use force. If used, force will not be directed against our compatriots in Taiwan, but against the foreign forces who intervene in China's reunification and go in for 'the independence of Taiwan.' We are fully confident that our compatriots in Taiwan, Hong Kong and Macao and those residing overseas would understand our principled position.

5. Challenged with world economic development in the 21st century, we shall spare no effort to develop economic exchange and cooperation between the two sides separated by the Taiwan Straits so that both sides enjoy a flourishing economy and the whole Chinese nation benefits. We maintain that political disagreements should not impede economic cooperation between the two sides of the Taiwan Straits. We shall continue, for an extended period, to implement a policy of encouraging Taiwanese investment on the mainland and carry out the Law of the People's Republic of China on Protecting Investments by Taiwan Compatriots. In any circumstances, we shall protect all legitimate rights and interests of Taiwanese investors in a down-to-earth way and continually encourage exchange and contacts across the Taiwan Straits which promote mutual understanding. Since the direct links for postal, air and shipping services and trade between the two sides are the objective requirements for their economic development and contacts in various fields, and since they are in the interests of the people on both sides, it is absolutely necessary to adopt practical measures to speed up the establishment of such direct links. Efforts should be made to promote negotiations on certain specific issues between the two sides. We are in favor of conducting this kind of negotiations on the basis of reciprocity and mutual benefit and signing nongovernmental agreements on the protection of the rights and interests of industrialists and business people from Taiwan.
6. The splendid culture of 5,000 years created by the sons and daughters of all ethnic groups of China has become ties keeping the entire Chinese people close at heart and constitutes an important basis for the peaceful reunification of the motherland. People on both sides should jointly inherit and carry forward the fine traditions of the culture.
7. The 21 million Taiwan people, whether born there or in other provinces, are Chinese and our own flesh and blood. The lifestyles of our Taiwan compatriots and their desire to be masters of their own country should be fully respected. All their legitimate rights and interests must be protected. All relevant departments in our Party and government, including agencies stationed abroad, must improve their relations with our Taiwan compatriots, listen to their views and requests, show concern and take care of their interests and do everything they can to help solve their problems. We hope that Taiwan Island enjoys social stability, economic growth and affluence. We also hope that all political parties in Taiwan will adopt a sensible, forward-looking and constructive attitude and promote the expansion of relations between the two sides. We welcome all political parties and personages from different walks of life in Taiwan [to] exchange opinions with us on the relations between the two sides and on peaceful reunification. Their visits to the mainland are also welcome. All personages from various circles who have contributed to the reunification of China will go down in history for their deeds.
8. We welcome leaders of Taiwan to visit the mainland in their proper status. We also are ready to accept invitations to visit Taiwan. We may discuss state affairs or exchange opinions on certain issues first. Even a simple visit to the side will be useful. The affairs of Chinese people should be handled by us, something that does not take an international occasion to accomplish. People of both sides of the Taiwan Straits eagerly look forward to meeting each other and being able to freely exchange visits.¹⁰

¹⁰ Jiang Zemin, "Jiang Zemin's Eight-Point Proposal," Taiwan Affairs Office of the State Council Website.

APPENDIX C

Lee Teng-hui's "Six Points"

1. The fact that the Chinese mainland and Taiwan have been ruled by two political entities in no way subordinate to each other had led to a state of division between the two sides and separate governmental jurisdictions, hence, the issue of national unification....Only by facing up to this reality can both sides build greater consensus on the 'one China' issue and at the earliest possible date.
2. In Taiwan, we have long taken upon ourselves the responsibility for safeguarding and furthering traditional Chinese culture, and advocate that culture by the basis for exchanges between both sides to help promote the nationalistic sentiment for living together in prosperity and to foster a strong sense of brotherliness...
3. We will continue to assist the mainland in developing its economy and upgrading the living standards of its people based upon our existing investments and trade relations. As for trade and transportation links with the mainland, the agencies concerned have to make in-depth evaluations as well as careful plans since these are very complicated issues...
4. I have indicated on several occasions that if leaders on both sides could meet with each other on international occasions in a natural manner, this could alleviate the political confrontation between both sides and foster a harmonious atmosphere for developing future relations...It is our firm belief that the more international organizations both sides join on an equal footing, the more favorable the environment will become for the growth of bilateral relations and for the process of peaceful unification...
5. We believe the mainland authorities should demonstrate their goodwill by publicly renouncing the use of force and refrain from making any military move that might arouse anxiety or suspicion on this side of the Taiwan Strait, thus paving the way for formal negotiations between both sides to put an end to the state of hostility.
6. Hong Kong and Macau are integral parts of the Chinese nation...Post-1997 Hong Kong and post-1999 Macau are naturally a matter of great concern to us. In this regard, the ROC government has reiterated its determination to maintain normal contact with Hong Kong and Macau, further participate in affairs related to Hong Kong and Macau, and provide better services to our compatriots there...¹¹

¹¹ Cited in Shirley A. Kan, "China/Taiwan: Evolution of the 'One China' Policy – Key Statements from Washington, Beijing, and Taipei," in *Taiwan-China: A Most Ticklish Standoff*, ed. Adam W. Clarke (Huntington: Novinka Books, 2001), 96-7.

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